NATION

Gaza protest: Hundreds of US students held

≫ Page: 6 ≪

BUSINESS

WeWork Global to sell entire 27% stake in India

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Gukesh's win tectonic shift in world chess order: Kasparov

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 24 APRIL 2024 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 14 SHAWWAL, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 95 | Pages: 8

Shah holds rally for Tejasvi Surya in Bengaluru South

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday held a massive roadshow in Bengaluru, waving at an enthusiastic and large crowd along the route.

Standing on a specially designed vehicle, the senior BJP leader greeted people gathered on either side of the roads and nearby buildings, many of whom were seen chanting 'Modi, Modi', 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogans, amid loud cheers and sounds of drum beat, in what appeared to be a "festive atmosphere" in several places.

People showered flower petals, as his cavalcade passed through areas in the Bengaluru South Lok Sabha segment, a BJP stronghold.

At some places, Shah too responded by hurling back at the crowd of flower petals accumulated on the bonnet of the vehicle.

Shah, holding a lotus symbol, was accompanied in the vehicle by Bengaluru South BJP Lok Sabha candidate and present MP Tejasvi Surya, veteran BJP leader and former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, and Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka, among others.

The entire distance was decked up with lights and saffron hues as BJP flags were seen on either side of the road, and hundreds of party workers and supporters too were wearing saffron shawls and caps. Cultural teams were also stationed at some places along the stretch to welcome the Shah.

—PTI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday held a massive roadshow in Bengaluru South on Tuesday **PHOTO: X/@BJP4India**

CM protests against Centre over funds

CM alleges PM hates Karnataka's farmers

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Bengaluru, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah squatted in front of Mahatma Gandhi statue in Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday, and demanded that the Centre must release drought fund urgently.

Siddaramaiah alleged that Modi and Shah "hate Karnataka and its farmers" due to which the drought relief funds were not released even after seven months of severe drought.

The Chief Minister said the state has not seen such a severe drought in 100 years.

He was joined by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Congress leader Randeep Surjewala along with other leaders on Tuesday as the government protested against the Centre's alleged injustice towards Karnataka.

Several memoranda to the Centre seeking release of grants were "met with silence" though the state assessed that it required Rs 18,171 crore for drought relief work as per the NDRF norms, he said.

As standing crops on 48,000 hectares were destroyed due to inadequate rains, the State government from its own resources paid Rs 2,000 to each farmer, thereby incurring an expenditure of Rs 650 crore on 34 lakh farmers, Siddaramaiah said.

"With what face are Modi and Shah coming to Karnataka (for Lok Sabha elections campaigning)," the Siddaramaiah asked, adding that the party is raising slogans of "Go back Modi" and "Go back Shah".

Siddaramaiah on Monday thanked Supreme Court for its "intervention" on the issue of providing drought management funds to Karnataka and termed it a success in his government's fight to secure justice and relief for the people of the State.

Karnataka Congress MLA Rizwan Arshad said the State went to Supreme Court and Modi government agreed to release compensation this week. Arshad questioned if going to court for their rights is necessary.

BJP files EC plaint

BJP leaders filed a complaint against Chief Secretary Rajneesh Goel for allowing a protest near Gandhi statue within Vidhana Soudha premises.

—Salar News

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a protest against the Central government over delay in the release of drought relief funds, at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru, on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Sonia's 'mangalsutra' was sacrificed for this nation: Priyanka

CHITRADURGA, 23 APRIL

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "gold and mangalsutra" remarks, saying her mother Sonia Gandhi sacrificed her 'mangalsutra' for the country.

"What talks are happening in this country? Two days back there were speeches that Congress wants to snatch your 'mangalsutra'. This country has been free for the past 75 years, and 55 years Congress was in power. Did Congress ever snatch your gold or 'mangalsutra'?," she asked at an election rally here.

Priyanka was referring to Modi's allegations that the Congress plans to give people's hard-earned money and valuables to "infiltrators" and "those who have more children" -- alluding to Muslims in his campaign speech in Rajasthan yesterday -- and would steal the "gold of mothers and sisters" if voted to power.

In a sharp attack on Modi, Priyanka said: "When there was war, Indira Gandhi (her grandmother and former prime minister) donated her gold."

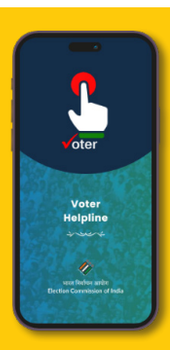
"Had Modi understood the importance of 'mangalsutra', he would not have spoken such unethical things," she added.

Priyanka said women's spirit of service is the foundation of all traditions of India.

Remarking that Modi does not understand the struggle of women, Priyanka asked where he was when women's savings were taken away and they were asked to deposit it in the banks because of demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denomination notes.

"During the farmers' agitation, 600 farmers died. Modi give a thought on the 'mangalsutra' of those women? When a woman was paraded naked in Manipur before the entire nation, why was Modi silent and not thi nk of her mangalsutra?" Priyanka asked. *—PTI*

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra & ex-deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha K Rahman Khan campaign for Bengaluru South's Sowmya Reddy at HSR Layout on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**



Dear readers, you can only vote if your name appears in the Voter List (also known as electoral roll). To check your name on the voters list, log into https://electoralsearch.eci.gov.in, or call Voter Helpline 1950 (please add your STD code before dialling). You can also send a message to 1950. Type: ECI <space> (your voter ID number)

Congress moves EC, accuses BJP of misinformation over its manifesto

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Congress on Tuesday complained to Election Commission and sought action against BJP alleging that the ruling party was spreading confusion and angst among the salaried professionals and the middle class over Rahul Gandhi's remarks about equitable development of society.

In a complaint to the chief election commissioner, All India Professionals' Congress head Praveen Chakravarty claimed, "There is a wilful and deliberate attempt to stoke confusion, havoc and angst among the salaried professionals and the middle class through misinformation and lies."

He said while launching the Congress party's manifesto in Hyderabad on 6 April, party leader Rahul Gandhi spoke about Congress' commitment to economic and social justice to ensure more equitable development of our society.

"This message has been deliberately twisted and propagated," he alleged.

Terming it as "fake news", Chakravarty demanded action against the BJP stating that the ruling party was spreading misinformation about the Congress' manifesto and its leaders alleging that the party would "redistribute wealth" if it came to power.

He also complained to EC against an individual along with his phone number who forwarded the message to the professionals on WhatsApp which says that the Congress party manifesto promises to "confiscate two-thirds of your assets for redistribution to the poor under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Wealth Redistribution Scheme".

He also referred to an article in a leading daily using this as the basis for such "misinformation".Terming the claims as "utterly false", Chakravarty said the Congress party's manifesto makes no such promise anywhere.

Meanwhile, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said that party is exploring legal remedies as the Election Commission of India (ECI) is not acting on the complaint against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "redistribution of wealth" remarks.

"Modi made hate speeches in Rajasthan. My colleagues met the Election Commissioner (EC) on Monday and we have pressed charges against him. As they are not acting upon our complaint, we are looking at legal remedies," she said.

—PTI

K'taka on alert over bird flu in Kerala

MANGALURU, 23 APRIL

As an outbreak of avian flu has been reported in some districts of neighbouring Kerala, the border areas of Karnataka, including Mangaluru, have been put on high alert, officials of the Karnataka Animal Husbandry department said.

At present, the situation in Kerala is being monitored before any action can be taken. Not only railways but also road transport ferrying chicken loads from Kerala to Mangaluru are under surveillance. Mangaluru, being one of the largest consumers of chicken from Kerala, has halted chicken procurement from Kerala-based suppliers. Despite this, the market has not experienced significant fluctuations in supply yet, as local stocks have been adequate to meet the demand for the next few days. Demand for chicken could fall for a few days due to a series of temple festivals in coastal areas, where many consumers refrain from consuming meat-based meals. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Govt denies visa to Aus scribe for report on Nijjar

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

An Australian journalist on Tuesday claimed that she was forced to leave India after the government refused to extend her work visa contending that her reportage had "crossed a line". Avani Dias, the South Asia Bureau Chief of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, said she had to leave India on 19 April, the day the Lok Sabha elections started after the government objected to her reporting on the assassination of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. "Last week, I had to leave India abruptly. The Modi Government told me my visa extension would be denied, saying my reporting 'crossed a line'," Dias said on X. "We were also told my election accreditation would not come through because of an Indian Ministry directive. We left on day one of voting in the national election in what Modi calls "the mother of democracy," said Dias, who had been working in India for the past two-and-a-half years. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

A law student gifts Chief Minister Siddaramaiah a garland made of free bus tickets in Bengaluru. The gesture was her way to express gratitude for free travel for women via Shakti scheme **PHOTO: X**

Extreme weather may pose risk to inflation: RBI

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

Extreme weather conditions may pose a risk to inflation, along with prolonged geo-political tensions that could keep crude oil prices volatile, the Reserve Bank's April Bulletin said on Tuesday. The retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) has eased to 4.9 per cent in March after averaging 5.1 per cent in the preceding two months. Reserve Bank, which mainly factors in CPI while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, has kept the key interest rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February 2023, citing concerns on the inflation front. An article on 'State of the Economy' published in the Bulletin further said global growth momentum has been sustained in the first quarter of 2024, and the outlook for world trade is turning positive. *—PTI*

BLINKEN RELEASES REPORT

US report flags human rights abuses in strife-torn Manipur

WASHINGTON, 23 APRIL

There were significant human rights abuses in Manipur after the outbreak of ethnic conflict, the US State Department said on Monday in its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the incident as "shameful" and urged action on the case.

In its annual report of State Department, which is mandated by the US Congress, it mentions the raids by tax authorities on the office of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the conviction and sentencing to two years of prison to Rahul Gandhi by a court in Gujarat.

Released by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the report mentions some of the positive developments on the issue of human rights and freedom of expression and gathering in the year 2023, the duration of the report.

India has previously criticised the US for releasing reports on human rights and religious freedoms based on "misinformation and flawed understanding."

The State Department report also talks about the ethnic violence in Manipur.

"The outbreak of ethnic conflict between the Kuki and Meitei ethnic groups during the year in Manipur resulted in significant human rights abuses. Media reported at least 175 persons were killed and more than 60,000 displaced between 3 May and 15 November" the State Department said.

Activists and journalists reported armed conflict, rapes, and assaults in addition to the destruction of homes, businesses, and places of worship.

Referring to the tax raid on BBC offices, the report said although tax authorities described the search as motivated by irregularities in the BBC's tax payments and ownership structure, officials also searched and seized equipment from journalists who were not involved in the organisation's financial processes. *—PTI*

India has previously criticised the US for releasing reports on human rights violation **PHOTO: PTI**

Kid dies after dad drives car over her

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

A one-half-year-old toddler was run over by an SUV driven by her father at HSR Layout here on Sunday night. The deceased is Shaiza Jannat. The incident happened after the family returned from attending a wedding in Channapatna. "Once the luggage was all unloaded from the vehicle, the father moved the car forward. He was unaware that his daughter was standing at a close proximity to the car." HSR Layout police said.

The entire incident was captured on CCTV, further highlighting the tragedy of the situation.

—Salar News

PHOTO: PTI

Mysuru tourist spots to be shut on Friday

BENGALURU,

To boost voter turnout for Lok Sabha Elections, authorities have decided to close popular tourist destinations in Mysuru on 26 April. With the voting day falling on Friday, and Saturday and Sunday already being holidays, officials fear that potential travellers might opt for a long weekend getaway instead of voting. Mysuru Zoo, Karanji Lake, Mysuru Palace and Raja seat in Madikeri will remain closed. To incentivise voting, Mysuru's hotels and restaurants have announced discounts and exclusive packages for voters. Visitors' entry to Nandi Hills were shut recently. *—Salar News*

Vehicle rams into pedestrians, kills 3 in Raichur

RAICHUR, 23 APRIL

Three men were killed on Tuesday after a pickup vehicle allegedly rammed into them while they were on their way to fetch water from River Krishna to perform religious rituals on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanthi. Udayakumar, 30; Ayyangowda, 28 and Mahesh, 24, were walking along with a group of 'Hanuman Maladaris' when the accident took place at Shaktinagar in Raichur taluk. Two other injured people were rushed to a nearby hospital where they are under treatment. The villagers managed to apprehend the driver, Madhusudhan Gowda, who attempted to flee the spot. *—PTI*

St John's College of Nursing to hold convocation

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

St. John's College of Nursing is set to commemorate another milestone in its journey of nursing education as it prepares to host its graduation ceremony on 25 April, 2024. With 222 nursing students poised to graduate, the occasion promises to be a celebration of academic achievement and the dedication of future healthcare professionals. Academy of Health Sciences, will grace the event as Chief Guest and Presiding Officer respectively will grace the event as Chief Guest Annually, it trains 260 undergraduate and 40 postgraduate nurses. *—Salar News*

Sorry, we will be on your side: CM to Neha's father

Slain Neha's father apologised to the govt for lashing out

HUBBALLI, 23 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday spoke to the father of slain student Neha Hiremath over the phone and said "sorry" for his daughter's killing, and assured that "we will be on your side".

He also informed Niranjan Hiremath, who is also a Congress councillor of Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation, about the government's decision to hand over the murder case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and setting up a special court to fast-track trial.

Siddaramaiah spoke to Hiremath over a phone call during State's Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil's visit to Hiremath's house here.

- Hiremath apologised to the government, Congress leaders and police for his comments against them and said they were made due to a lack of information, amid grief

Neha, 23, was stabbed to death on the campus of BVB College last Thursday. The accused Fayaz Khondunaik, who fled from the scene, was arrested by the police subsequently.

Siddaramaih on Monday had announced his government has decided to hand over the investigation into CID, and to set up a special court for speedy disposal of the case.

CM Siddaramiah PHOTO: PTI

The case sparked widespread outrage and has snowballed into a political slugfest between ruling Congress and Opposition BJP. While the ruling party has tried to project it as an incident with a personal angle, the saffron party has called it a "love jihad" case and has said it's a testimony of the deterioration of law and order in the state.

Earlier, Siddarmaiah's statement that the murder was due to "personal reasons" and Home Minister G Parameshwara's comments that the duo was in love elicited sharp reactions from Hiremath and family members and opposition parties.

Later speaking to reporters, Hiremath apologised to the government, Congress leaders and police for his comments against them and said they were made due to a lack of information, amid grief. *—PTI*

WORRY OVER SOCIAL JUSTICE

Panel slams Muslim categorisation

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

State's decision to categorise Muslim community as a backward caste for reservation purposes has drawn criticism from National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC). It said such blanket categorisation undermines social justice.

According to the data submitted by the Karnataka Backward Classes Welfare Department, all castes and communities within the Muslims are enlisted as socially and educationally backward classes under Category IIB in the State List of Backward Classes.

The NCBC, during a field visit last year, examined the state's reservation policy for OBCs in educational institutions and government jobs.

This categorisation has led to the provision of reservation benefits for 17 socially and educationally backward castes under Category I and 19 castes under Category II-A, respectively.

The NCBC said this will affect the marginalised Muslim castes and communities identified as socially and educationally backward.

NCBC claims treating the entire religion as backward overlooks the diversity and complexities within the society.

Karnataka provides 32 per cent reservation to backward classes in local body elections, including Muslims.

According to the 2011 Census, Muslims constitute 12.92 per cent of the population in Karnataka. *—PTI*

CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Congress Bengaluru Central candidate Mansoor Ali Khan campaigns in Shivajinagar with MLA Rizwan Arshad, and other party workers, on Tuesday PHOTO: SALAR

ED seeks EC action against Cong MLA

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Enforcement Directorate (ED) has written to Election Commission seeking action against Karnataka Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy for allegedly "mobilising" Rs 42 crore funds for unlawful transactions, including alleged bribing of voters, during the 2023 Assembly elections in the State, sources said.

ED has also made a similar communication to Karnataka Lokayukta under Section 66(2) of Prevention of Money Laundering Act asking the latter to go through the evidence collected by it against Reddy, the legislator from the Ballari City seat, and register a case.

ED had raided the premises of Reddy and others linked to him in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh on 10 February as part of a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal mining and "fraud" land deals.

Three days later, it issued a statement saying, "crucial evidence was seized along with unaccounted cash of Rs 31 lakh, establishing involvement of Bharath Reddy, his personal assistant Rathna Babu and others in mobilising substantial amounts of cash for illegal payments".

Reddy defeated his nearest rival Gali Lakshmi Aruna of Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha by over 37,000 votes during the May 2023 polls. *—PTI*

DK Suresh PHOTO: FB

FSL clears DKS in pro-Pak slogan case

Bengaluru,23 April

Just two days ahead of Lok Sabha elections, a forensic science laboratory has given a clean chit to Bengaluru Rural candidate DK Suresh in pro-Pakistan slogans case. Suresh and his supporters were accused of chanting 'Pakistan ki jai' during election campaign in Tippasandra village. However, the FSL report negates the claims, saying that no anti-national slogans were raised. The report said Congress worker Ramachandraiah shouted 'Balakrishna ki Jai' during the campaign, debunking claims of any pro-Pakistan slogans being raised. Meanwhile Ramachandraiah filed a case against five people for deliberately distorting 'Balakrishna ki Jai' to 'Pakistan ki Jai'. *—Salar News*

Not scared of expulsion from BJP: Eshwarappa

SHIVAMOGGA, 23 APRIL

Former Deputy Chief Minister KS Eshwarappa on Tuesday said he is not scared of expulsion from BJP as he reiterated his resolve to contest the Lok Sabha elections as an independent with full vigour.

"I will not be scared of expulsion. My contesting is clear, winning from Shivamogga is clear and strengthening the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also clear," Eshwarappa said.

"I belong to BJP originally; BS Yediyurappa represents the duplicate BJP party. I am the true pillar of the party," Eshwarappa remains confident of going back to BJP after the elections

Eswarappa added that he has been allotted election symbol of "farmer with sugarcane", which indicates blessings for him from the farmers of his constituency.

BJP on Monday expelled Eshwarappa for six years for violating party discipline and contesting Lok Sabha polls as an independent candidate.

After the denial of ticket, Eshwarappa rebelled against former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa and BJP's Parliamentary Board member accusing him of scuttling his son's political prospects.

Modi had then dialled Eshwarappa and spoke to him over a video call and expressed appreciation for his move to retire from poll politics, as per the instructions from party. *—Salar News with agencies*

SC denies bail to Murugha Mutt pontiff Sharanaru in POCSO case

CHITRADURGA, 23 APRIL

Supreme Court cancelled the bail granted to Murugha Mutt pontiff Shivamurthy Murugha Sharanaru, who is facing charges in two POCSO cases. The court ordered him to be sent to judicial custody for four months. The apex court also directed that he should be moved to judicial custody within a week.

Furthermore, Supreme Court has mandated that the trial of the victim children should be conducted in a special court. In case the investigation isn't completed within the stipulated four months, the judicial custody can be extended for an additional two months. Sharanaru was arrested in connection with the alleged sexual assault of female students at Mysuru's hostel SJM Vidyapeeth. Subsequently, High Court had granted him conditional bail. After being released on bail, he was under the care of the administration of Muruga Sri Mutt and SJM Vidyapeetha.

PHOTO: PTI

- The court ordered him to be sent to judicial custody for four months. The apex court also directed that he should be moved to judicial custody within a week

Former minister H Ekantaiah had approached Supreme Court challenging this bail. Following the application, the court has restrained the administration of Muruga Sri Mutt. Additionally, the government has been directed to form a committee within three days to manage the Mutt and SJM Vidyapeeth. *—Salar News*

Meaning of 'Karaga'

Ka—ra—ga acronym stands for: KA — Kaiyalli muttade (without touching by hand) RA — Rundadalli Darisi — (bearing it on the head) GA — Gatisuvudu — (to walk).

Days 1 to 6

During the first six days of Karaga festival, Ganachari (head priest) goes to the four pillars (signifying the boundary of Bengaluru) in the City and asks the permission of 'Pancha Bhuta' or Five Elements — Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth — to give him strength to carry a Kalasha (crown) for 10 hours on 9th day without causing him any harm.

Day 7 - Hasi Karaga

Hasi Karaga symbolises the reincarnation of Draupadi on earth where she stays in the red crown (worn by head priest) for three days each year during the first full moon.

Day 8

On the eight day of Karaga, Ganachari performs a host of rituals wearing bangles and mangalsutra.

Day 9 Dodda Karaga

On the last day on Dodda Karaga, Ganachari takes a procession in Bengaluru

NINE-DAY FESTIVAL

Karaga: A City festival unifying Hindus & Muslims for 800 yrs

Procession has a stopover at the tomb of the 18th-century Muslim Saint Hazarath Tawakkal Mastan Shah in Cottonpet

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 22 APRIL

Karaga festival in Bengaluru has stood as a testament to unity amid diversity, embodying harmonious coexistence of Hindu and Muslim communities.

"One of the traditions reflecting religious harmony and has transcended generations is having a stopover at the tomb of the 18th-century Muslim Saint, Hazarath Tawakkal Mastan Shah, in Cottonpete during Karaga procession," said Balakrishna Kshatriya, Head of Tigalara community, which leads the rituals at the festival attended by people from various religions. Mastan was injured while trying to catch a glimpse of the procession, said Gnanendra, head priest. The temple priest applied turmeric to Mastan's wounds, and thereafter the processions halted at his dargah.

Karaga festival is an 800-year-old tradition that brings Hindus and Muslims together in Bengaluru PHOTO: SALAR

Just a day before adorning the traditional yellow saree, jewellery and makeup for the grand occasion (Draupadi Devi Karaga) on 24 April, Gnanendra, also known as Ganachari, is gearing up to carry on the weight of tradition, an ornamental headgear.

The Karaga tradition is performed by Vahnikula Kshatriya or Tigalare community. The festivities begin at Dharmaraya Swamy Temple, Tigalare Pete, after dusk and continue into the early hours under the light of the full moon. The main priest transforms into Draupadi, wearing female attire as he leads the procession.

From priest to goddess

The midnight festival of Karaga begins a week earlier with Karga procession, featuring Veerakumaras or 'hero-youths'. Leading up to the festival, these youths adhere to all the rules set by the Ganachari.

On the seventh night of the festival, "when Ganachari takes a holy bath at the Sampangi Lake we will join him with the rhythmic beats of drums," Sagar Kshatriya, 25-year-old IT employee who is a Veerakumar, told Salar News.

Ganachari must belong to Tigalara community. The Tigalaras are martial men and are famous for their fine physique.

Former Ganachari Shreekanta Kshatriya said rigorous preparations are undertaken before the festival to instil discipline and strength for the Ganachari who carries the Karaga.

Ganachari embarks on his journey, leaving his home to take shelter on the roof of Dharmaraya temple. Simultaneously, a ritual unfolds at his home: "The Ganachari's wife symbolically assumes the role of a widow," the temple priest said. —Salar News

Adornments on Dodda Karaga

During a war with Raktabheeja demon, Draupadi created warriors and weapons from various parts of her body. From her forehead Ganachari (head priest in pic) was created; Ganachari is responsible for leading the procession.

- The Karga bearer must endure the weight of nearly 10-15kg on his head, where the goddess is present and adorned with jasmine flowers.

The jasmine worn by Ganachari is expected to stay fresh for 10 hours, and when the flower dries up, it is believed that the goddess's ener- gy has departed from the body.

- The long stick symbolises distance from evil.
- The yellow saree embodies brightness and liveliness, evoking joy, optimism, and positivity.
- The knife signifies the sharpness of human intellect, enabling it to discern between good and evil.

Adornments of Karaga

1. Jasmine flowers represent the energy of the goddesses as it symbolise the embodiment of beauty, wealth and prosperity.
2. The red crown held by Ganachari is a form of welcoming Draupadi to the earth.

Rituals

1. On the seventh day of nine-day Karaga, the red crown is kept in Garadi Mane (Akhada) on Dharmaraya Swamy Temple premises and it takes the form of goddesses.
2. Ganachari goes to Garadi Mane and takes the crown to the temple.

Mainstream media blacking out Cong, says Shrinate

GUWAHATI, 23 APRIL

Congress Spokesperson Supriya Shrinate claimed that social media has helped her party to connect with people as mainstream media is "blacking out" the grand old party. Respecting India's diversity, the party has been creating content in as many regional languages as possible, said Shrinate who heads the Congress social media and digital platforms cell. She claimed that her party has 'far higher' engagement rates as compared to its competitor BJP.

"Engagement rates on social media for Congress vis-a-vis our main competitor BJP are far higher. Our reach is far higher despite the fact that our actual followers are still lower than BJP," Shrinate, said. —*PTI*

Pawan Kalyan declares assets worth ₹164.5cr

AMARAVATI, 23 APRIL

Janasena founder and actor Pawan Kalyan has declared that his family has assets, both movable and immovable, worth Rs 164.53 crore even as his income for the last four years stood at nearly 60 crore. According to an affidavit filed with the election authorities, the actor-politician has liabilities to the tune of 65.77 crore. Kalyan's family including his four dependent children have movable assets worth 46.17 crore and immovable assets to the extent of 118.36 crore. He had shown a loss of 1.10 crore in the Income Tax returns for the year 2018-19. Kalyan on Tuesday filed his nomination from the Pithapuram Assembly segment in Andhra Pradesh. As part of a seat-sharing deal among NDA partners, TDP was allocated 144 Assembly and 17 Lok Sabha constituencies while BJP will contest six Lok Sabha and 10 Assembly seats. Under the deal, Janasena will contest two Lok Sabha and 21 Assembly seats.—*PTI*

'BJP forced EC into 7-phase polls in WB despite heat'

SILIGURI/ BAISNABNAGAR, 23 APRIL

Senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee on Tuesday alleged BJP "forced" the Election Commission of India (ECI) to organise the Lok Sabha elections over eight phases in West Bengal despite the scorching heat so that its top leaders could campaign well in the state. Addressing an election rally in Matigara in Siliguri in support of TMC's Darjeeling candidate Gopal Lama, Banerjee said a similar thing happened during the 2021 assembly elections when polling was held over eight phases, following which a new wave of the pandemic struck the state. "The BJP-led government at the Centre had in 2021 forced the EC to hold an eight-phase assembly election in West Bengal with scant regard to the threat posed by the pandemic, which was raging at that time. You all know what followed -- another wave struck and took away so many lives. Who is responsible for the loss of lives?" Banerjee said. —*PTI*

Modi 'Vish Guru', never respected mangalsutra: Cong

JAIPUR, 23 APRIL

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his speeches at recent election rallies, saying the language he used suggests that he is not a "Vishwa Guru" but a "Vish Guru". Ramesh also said a person who never respected the 'mangalsutra' is now saying that the Congress will snatch women's 'mangalsutra'. "Vishwa Guru" refers to a world leader. "Vish" means poison. "The Prime Minister is speaking in a different language regarding our manifesto. And it is clear that he is nervous, in trouble, and has adopted the path of polarisation. His language is divisive and for polarisation," the Congress general secretary said at a press conference. —*PTI*

Cong takes from dalits, gives Muslims: PM

'Reading Hanuman Chalisa a crime under Cong'

JAIPUR, 23 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said Congress has tried to extend reservation on the basis of religion and give it to Muslims, and accused the party again of hatching a "deep conspiracy" to snatch people's wealth and distribute it among a "select" group.

In a blistering attack on the Opposition party, he charged that it is difficult to follow one's faith under Congress rule and even listening to Hanuman Chalisa becomes a crime.

His remarks at an election rally in Rajasthan's Tonk came on the day the country celebrated Hanuman Jayanti.

He said the then prime minister Manmohan Singh had given a speech in which he had said Muslims have the first right on the country's resources.

"This was not a coincidence. This is not a single statement. The Congress ideology has always been of appeasement and vote bank politics.

"As soon as the Congress formed the government at the Centre in 2004, one of the first things it did was to reduce the SC/ST reservation in Andhra Pradesh and give it to Muslims," Modi said.

Modi's speech at a rally in Rajasthan's Banswara had triggered a political row Sunday when he referred to the Congress manifesto and charged that the party was set to redistribute people's wealth to "infiltrators" and "those who have more children".

He made a similar remark -- but skipped the direct reference to Muslims – at an Uttar Pradesh rally on Monday. And he returned to the theme in Tonk on Tuesday.

Modi said when BJP government in Karnataka got an opportunity, it abolished the Muslim quota created by the Congress government out of the reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

"Their leader has said in a speech that X-ray of wealth will be done. This means that if something is kept in a box or hidden in a wall, it will be searched through X-ray," Modi claimed.

Modi said he is dedicated to Constitution and is a person who worships Babasaheb Ambedkar.

This was the prime minister's last election rally in Rajasthan where the final round of polling will take place on 26 April. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Tonk district, Rajasthan on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

- He said the then prime minister Manmohan Singh had given a speech in which he had said Muslims have the first right on the country's resources. His remarks at an election rally in Rajasthan's Tonk came on the day the country celebrated Hanuman Jayanti

KEJRI, KAVITHA'S JUDICIAL CUSTODY EXTENDED

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

A Delhi court on Tuesday extended till 7 May the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and BRS leader K Kavitha in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam.

Special judge for CBI and ED matters Kaveri Baweja extended the custody of Kejriwal and Kavitha along with co-accused Chanpreet Singh, who allegedly managed the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) funds in the 2022 Goa assembly elections, after they were produced before the court through video conference on the expiry of their remand.

The judge also extended the judicial custody of Kavitha, a Telangana MLC and the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, till May 7 in a related corruption case being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The court, meanwhile, adjourned for Wednesday the hearing on Kavitha's bail application in the money laundering case.

The judge had on 22 April reserved for 2 May its order on her bail application in the corruption case.

Kavitha is in judicial custody in both the cases lodged by Enforcement Directorate (ED) and CBI.

She was arrested by ED from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad in the money laundering case on 15 March. Later, she was arrested by the CBI from Tihar jail on 11 April. —*PTI*

After major row, Kejriwal finally gets insulin in jail

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been administered a "low dose" of insulin after his blood sugar level spiked, officials of Tihar jail here said on Tuesday.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) welcomed this news received on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti and said the development was the result of the blessings of the deity.

According to a Tihar official, Kejriwal was given two units of low dose insulin on Monday evening on the advice of AIIMS doctors.

His blood sugar level reading was found to be 217 around 7 pm, following which the doctors at Tihar looking after him decided to give him the insulin, the official said.

AIIMS specialists, during a video conference with the chief minister on 20 April, had advised Tihar doctors that insulin could be given to him if his sugar level crosses a certain level, he added.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said it was due to the blessings of Lord Hanuman that the chief minister was given insulin after nearly 23 days of being lodged in jail and alleged ill-treatment with the party's national convener.

Welcoming the development, Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi said in a post on X in Hindi, "Jai Bajrang Bali! Good news received on Hanuman Jayanti. Tihar administration finally gave insulin to Arvind Kejriwal ji. This is the result of the blessings of Hanuman ji and the struggle of the people of Delhi. Even in this time of struggle, the blessings of Bajrang Bali remain on all of us." —*PTI*

Arvind Kejriwal PHOTO: PTI

- AIIMS specialists, on 20 April, had advised Tihar doctors that insulin could be given to Kejriwal if his sugar level crosses a certain level, he added. AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said it was due to the blessings of Lord Hanuman that he was given the insulin jab

POST REBELLION

BJP replaces 'defiant' Ladakh MP Namgyal with Gyalson

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

BJP on Tuesday named Tashi Gyalson as its candidate from the Ladakh Lok Sabha seat, dropping sitting MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, who reacted defiantly and asserted that he will soon announce his next course of action.

Gyalson is the chairman-cum-chief executive councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in Leh. Hours after the announcement, Namgyal said his supporters across the Union Territory are voicing disapproval over the decision.

"Today, the BJP announced a new candidate for the Ladakh parliamentary constituency, replacing the sitting MP without providing transparent and compelling justification," Namgyal said in a post on social media platform Facebook.

"I have communicated my disagreement to the party leadership through proper channels regarding this injustice to a dedicated 'karyakarta'. Hundreds of BJP activists and my supporters from across Ladakh have also voiced their disapproval of this decision," he said. Namgyal had hit the headlines in 2019 with his viral speech in Lok Sabha to defend the Narendra Modi government's decision to repeal Article 370 and make Ladakh a separate Union Territory.

BJP's decision to drop Namgyal comes amid resentment towards the ruling party among a section of Buddhists in Leh.

The local sources said Gyalson, who is also a lawyer, is in a better position to maintain the BJP's hold over the seat, which also includes Muslim-majority Kargil.

Polling is scheduled for 20 May in the constituency. —*PTI*

Tashi Gyalson PHOTO: PTI

FARM LOAN WAIVER BEFORE 15 AUG: T'GANA CM

HYDERABAD, 23 APRIL

Asserting his government will implement the Rs two lakh farm loan waiver before 15 August, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday challenged BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao to dissolve his party if it is done.

Reddy, who was speaking at a Congress meeting in his Assembly constituency-Kodangal-, referred to BRS MLA T Harish Rao's reported comments as to whether the Chief Minister would resign if he was not able to implement the loan waiver before 15 August.

Reddy said the government would pay the loan amounts and cooperative banks should not trouble farmers. Attacking BJP, he claimed that devotion to god should be in the hearts and that "shouting in the streets" is not devotion. —*PTI*

Cong expells Binay Tamang for supporting BJP in WB

KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

Congress on Tuesday expelled its West Bengal unit general secretary Binay Tamang for six years for "anti-party activities", hours after Gorkha leader extended support to BJP's Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat candidate Raju Bista.

"Binay Tamang has been expelled from the party for six years for anti-party activities. His expulsion will be effective immediately," Congress leader and former MLA Manoj Chakraborty said.

Tamang said his expulsion from the Congress was a "victory for Gorkhas" and he was not much bothered by it.

Tamang, who is the general secretary of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPCC), said that he took this decision "independently after deep thought and realisation on all issues".

Tamang had expressed displeasure over Congress nominating Munish Tamang, former national president of Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh (BGP), for Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat, less than a week after he joined the grand old party.

Tamang said that since he has dedicated his life to the people of the Hills and the Gorkha community, he would not be able to lead them to a "wrong path" but protect them.

Darjeeling is scheduled to go for the polls on 26 April. —*PTI*

Binay Tamang PHOTO: PTI

Congress nominee's 'Constitution forced on Goa' remark irks Modi

PANAJI, 23 APRIL

South Goa Congress nominee Viriato Fernandes's remarks that the Constitution was "forced" on the costal state after its liberation from the Portuguese rule sparked a row with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday latching on to the comments to slam Opposition and BJP lodging a complaint with the Election Commission (EC).

Fernandes said he was ready for a debate on his controversial comments as well as on issues like "destruction of Goa's identity", unemployment, inflation, crime and corruption under BJP rule even as he received support from his party in the coastal state.

Addressing an election rally on Monday in South Goa, Fernandes referred to his conversation with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi ahead of 2019 Lok Sabha polls, and said he had told him, "When Goa was liberated in the year 1961, the Indian Constitution was forced upon us."His comments found echo in Chhattisgarh where Modi, addressing a BJP campaign rally in Sakti district, tore into Congress over the remarks and termed them a "ploy" to break the country. Modi further said today Congress was rejecting the Constitution in Goa, and tomorrow it would do the same in the entire country. —*PTI*

Viriato Fernandes PHOTO: PTI

- Fernandes said he was ready for a debate on his controversial comments as well as on issues like "destruction of Goa's identity"

CAMPAIGN SEASON

Guj to see 40 Cong biggies

AHMEDABAD, 23 APRIL

Senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and party President Mallikarjun Kharge are among the 40 star campaigners named by the grand old party for the Lok Sabha elections in Gujarat.

The state Congress unit on Tuesday shared the list of leaders, including party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi, former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, general secretary Randeep Surjewala and Rajasthan MLA Sachin Pilot, who would campaign for the party candidates.

KC Venugopal, Mukul Wasnik and Ramkishan Ojha are also among Congress leaders from the national team who will campaign for the party candidates in Gujarat, as per the list submitted to the Election Commission of India on 19 April.

Leaders from Gujarat who figure in the list of campaigners include Congress state president Shaktisinh Gohil, former state Chiefs Jagdish Thakor and Siddharth Patel, MLAs Amit Chavda, Jignesh Mevani and Shailesh Parmar, and former legislators Sukhram Rathwa and Lalit Kagathara —*PTI*

Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi PHOTO: PTI

TOUGH STEP AHEAD

Baharampur may not be a cakewalk for Adhir Chowdhury

KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

Unemployment and workforce migration continue to remain major issues in Congress heavyweight Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury's bastion, the Baharampur Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, and seems to have triggered 'anti-incumbency' for the five-time MP from the seat.

TMC sprung a surprise by bringing in former India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan from Gujarat to challenge Chowdhury, the son of the soil who has been winning the seat without a break since 1999.

Besides Pathan, Chowdhury is also taking on BJP's Nirmal Chandra Saha, a popular doctor from the region, where polls are scheduled on 13 May.

Congress candidate from Baharampur Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury checks out bag at a local market in Murshidabad; TMC's Yusuf Pathan campaigns in Murshidabad as well PHOTOS: PTI

"Although we consider Adhir da as our leader, we did not see his required involvement in Baharampur's development in the last decade. We had higher expectations from him," Sudhir Sengupta, a local businessman, said.

According to Lakshman Hazari, a resident of Amar Chakraborty Road in Baharampur town for the last 55 years, the entire district seems to have earned the dubious distinction of becoming the repository for supplying skilled labour to the rest of the country at a low cost.

While Baharampur is dominated by over 66 per cent Muslim population, the constituency is also inhabited by minorities like Christians (0.25 per cent), Jains (0.04 per cent) and Sikhs (0.01 per cent).

Besides the religious spread, 13.2 per cent of the total population in Baharampur belong to the Scheduled Castes (SC) category and 0.9 per cent to Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Lok Sabha constituency has seven Assembly segment-Burwan (SC), Kandi, Bharatpur, Rejinagar, Beldanga, Baharampur, Naoda- all in Murshidabad district. As a mark of making political inroads into one of the last remaining Congress strongholds of the state, TMC managed to win six of those seven seats in the 2021 Assembly elections.

Though Pathan has generated some excitement among a section of voters in Baharampur, experts expressed doubts on how much of that would get translated into votes in EVMs.

Criticising the TMC for nominating Pathan, the Congress leader said that the move would actually aid the BJP and was Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee's way of sending a "veiled friendship message to PM Modi". —*PTI*

High alert in J&K's Rajouri after firing incident

B RAJOURI, 23 APRIL

Following a firing incident last evening, security forces have been put on high alert in Rajouri. A search and cordon operation is currently underway in Kunda village, located in the Shahdara Sharief area of Rajouri's Thanna Mandi tehsil. A man was shot dead by unidentified persons on Monday evening, police said. The firing incident took place in Kunda Top in J-K's Rajouri. On Sunday, Jammu and Kashmir Police, in a joint operation with Special Operations Group (SOG), arrested a registered overground worker (OGW), who is also a school headmaster, with a foreign-made pistol and Chinese grenades from the Hari Budha area of Poonch district. Further information is awaited. *—ANI*

Constable shoots self dead after wife hangs herself in UP

BANDA, 23 APRIL

A 35-year-old constable allegedly shot himself dead using a government rifle after his wife hanged herself following an argument between the couple in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Chitrakoot district, police said on Tuesday. Kusum Devi,24, wife of constable Mayank Kumar Patel, hanged herself at their house in Devkali village of Raipura police station area after midnight on Monday, SHO Raipura Shailendra Pandey said. Patel had returned home on 21 April after completing his duty during the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Bijnor district and, therefore, had his government rifle, SHO Pandey said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Diamonds hidden in noodle packets seized in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

The Customs department has seized diamonds concealed in packets of noodles and gold hidden in the body parts of passengers and baggage, collectively valued at Rs 6.46 crore, at the Mumbai airport, an official said. Four passengers were arrested after the seizure of more than 6.815 kg of gold valued at Rs 4.44 crore and diamonds of Rs 2.02 crore over the weekend, the Customs official said in a release issued late Monday night. An Indian national travelling from Mumbai to Bangkok was intercepted and found smuggling the diamonds concealed in packets of noodles inside his trolley bag. A foreign national travelling from Colombo to Mumbai was intercepted and found carrying gold bars and a cut piece, with a net weight of 321 grams. Besides, 10 Indian nationals - two each travelling from Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and one each from Bahrain, Doha, Riyadh, Muscat, Bangkok and Singapore - were also intercepted and found carrying 6.199 kg gold, valued at Rs 4.04 crore, "concealed in the rectum, on body and inside the baggage," the release said without providing further details. *—PTI*

Pak-based terror module member held in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 23 APRIL

Punjab police has arrested a member of a terror module who was allegedly being handled by Pakistan-based operatives, police said on Tuesday. The Director General of Police, Punjab, Gaurav Yadav said that preliminary investigations reveal that the accused was tasked to carry out target killing in the Jammu and Kashmir region to |create fear and unrest. Pakistan-based operatives were allegedly handling the accused, the DGP said. *—PTI*

Patanjali told to print apology in newspapers as big as ads

Patanjali wrongly claimed its products have health benefits

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Supreme Court of India on Tuesday said that the Ramdev owned Patanjali's public apology in newspapers should be of same size as the advertisements of its products. Expanding the scope of its hearing in the case, the court took a stern view of misleading advertisements by Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and asked three Union ministries to inform it about the steps they have taken to curb the practice which takes "public for a ride" and adversely affects their health.

The court passed the order after Yoga guru Ramdev and his aide Balkrishna of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd. told a bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah that they have issued unqualified public apology in as many as 67 newspapers over misleading advertisements and are willing to issue additional advertisements expressing their contrition.

The bench said the public apology published in newspapers were not on record and asked those to be filed within two days. It posted the matter for 30 April for further consideration.While hearing the Patanjali case, the apex court said the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and the Consumer Protection Act and the related rules also needed a closer examination.

The bench said the public apology published in newspapers were not on record and asked those to be filed within two days PHOTO: PTI

It said the issue was not limited to Patanjali but extended to all FMCG firms which have been issuing "misleading advertisements and taking the public for a ride, in particular affecting the health of babies, school-going children and senior citizens who have been consuming products on the basis of the said misrepresentation".

The court asked the Union Ministries of consumer affairs, information and broadcasting, and information technology to explain what action they have taken to prevent the misuse of consumer laws.

The bench also asked the Indian Medical Association (IMA), the petitioner in the Patanjali advertisements case, to "put its house in order".On 16 April, the apex court had warned Ramdev and Balkrishna against any attempt to "degrade allopathy" and permitted them to tender a "public apology and show contrition" within a week in the contempt proceedings in the misleading advertisements case against Patanjali Ayurved Ltd.

- On 16 April, court had warned Ramdev and Balkrishna against any attempt to "degrade allopathy" and permitted them to tender a "public apology and show contrition" within a week in the contempt proceedings in the misleading advertisements case against Patanjali Ayurved Ltd

The apex court is hearing a plea filed in 2022 by the IMA alleging a smear campaign against the Covid vaccination drive and modern systems of medicine.

Ramdev and Balkrishna had earlier tendered an "unconditional and unqualified apology" before the top court over advertisements issued by the firm making tall claims about the medicinal efficacy of its products. *—PTI*

Govt denied visa for crossing a line: Aus scribe

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

An Australian journalist on Tuesday claimed that she was forced to leave India after the government refused to extend her work visa contending that her reportage had "crossed a line".

Avani Dias, the South Asia Bureau Chief of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, said she had to leave India on 19 April, the day the Lok Sabha elections started after the government objected to her reporting on the assassination of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

"Last week, I had to leave India abruptly. The Modi Government told me my visa extension would be denied, saying my reporting 'crossed a line'," Dias said on X.

"We were also told my election accreditation would not come through because of an Indian Ministry directive. We left on day one of voting in the national election in what Modi calls "the mother of democracy," said Dias, who had been working in India for the past two-and-a-half years.She said after intervention from the Australian government, her visa was extended for two months which was conveyed "less than 24 hours before my flight".The Australian Broadcasting Corporation said Dias was informed of the decision by an official from the Ministry of External Affairs, who said her most recent Foreign Correspondent episode "crossed a line".

ABC said YouTube has also blocked access in India to an episode of its news series Foreign Correspondent on the Nijjar killing. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/AVANI DIAS

> **Modi government told me my visa extension would be denied, saying my reporting crossed a line. I left on day one of voting in the national election in what Modi calls the mother of democracy**
>
> -Avani Dias, ABC South Asia Bureau Chief

RAIN FURY

A farmer inspects the damage after heavy rains and strong winds flatten wheat crop, on the outskirts of Amritsar, on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

ASI seeks more time for Bhojshala survey in MP

INDORE, 23 APRIL

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which is conducting a scientific survey at the medieval-era Bhojshala complex in Dhar district on the Madhya Pradesh High Court's direction, has sought eight more weeks to complete the exercise.

The ASI, in an application filed before the Indore bench of the high court on Monday, said it needed some more time to understand the nature of exposed portions of the structures in the disputed premises.

Hindus consider Bhojshala, an ASI-protected 11th-century monument, to be a temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while the Muslim community call it Kamal Maula Mosque.

As per an arrangement made by the ASI on 7 April, 2003, Hindus perform puja in the Bhojshala premises on Tuesdays, while Muslims offer namaz in the complex on Fridays.

The High Court has already fixed 29 April as the next date for hearing in the Bhojshala dispute case. The ASI's fresh application is also likely to come up for hearing the same day.

The court had on 11 March ordered the ASI to conduct a "scientific survey" of the Bhojshala-Kamal Moula mosque complex within six weeks.

On the court's direction, the ASI started the survey of the disputed complex on 22 March.

The survey was ordered on a plea from an outfit called Hindu Front For Justice (HFJ).

The ASI, in its application, said a detailed survey of the complex and its peripheral area is in progress using scientific tools, and its team is conducting detailed documentation of the entire monument. A team from the NGRI and their scientists were surveying the entire area regularly, strictly complying with the directions passed by the High Court, it said. *—PTI*

On the court's direction, the ASI started the survey of the disputed complex on 22 March PHOTO: ANI

PHOTO: FB

Ajit Pawar's son Parth gets Y-plus security cover

PUNE, 23 APRIL

Parth Pawar, the elder son of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and NCP's Baramati Lok Sabha seat candidate Sunetra Pawar, has been provided with 'Y-plus' category security cover, a top official of the Pune police said on Tuesday.

Parth, who unsuccessfully contested the Maval Lok Sabha seat in 2019 against the undivided Shiv Sena's sitting MP Shrirang Barne, is actively campaigning for his mother Sunetra Pawar.

Talking to PTI, Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said the decision about providing the Y-plus security cover was taken by the state government.

A local functionary of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) said the security cover has been provided to Parth due to security concerns.

"Parth Pawar is reaching out to people as part of the election campaign for his mother. He is an aggressive leader and there were concerns surrounding his security as he moves around in remote areas," he said. He also said sarcastically that two tanks should be deployed to provide security to Parth.

Y-plus security cover, the fourth highest level of security, typically includes an 11-member crew with one or two commandos. *—PTI*

Job scam: WB told to decide on prosecution

KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

Calcutta High Court on Tuesday directed the West Bengal chief secretary to decide by 2 May on grant of sanction for prosecution of former public servants arrested by CBI in the 2016 school jobs case, which saw the cancellation of over 25,500 appointments the day before.

A division bench said that in the event the chief secretary fails to comply with this order, the court will be constrained to initiate appropriate proceedings against him.

Another division bench of the High Court on Monday cancelled 25,753 appointments of teaching and non-teaching staff in West Bengal government-sponsored and -aided schools, declaring null and void the recruitment process of the State Level Selection Test (SLST) 2016 by the School Service Commission.

Noting that the application by CBI for sanction of prosecution of these persons has been pending since 2022, a division bench presided by Justice Joymalya Bagchi directed the chief secretary to decide on sanction of prosecution of the accused persons, who were arrested two years back, by May two.

Maintaining that grant of sanction is a stepping stone to the commencement of trial, the court said that it is the requirement of law that the sanctioning authority ought to take a prompt decision in the matter.

The court made the order during the hearing of bail prayers by the accused persons, who include Partha Chatterjee, a former education minister of the state. *—PTI*

Inspired by videos, 5 attempt extortion in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Five people were arrested for attempting to extort Rs 2 crore from a businessman and firing a bullet at his employee after they were allegedly inspired by gangster videos online, police here said on Tuesday.

"On 18 April, a PCR call regarding firing was received at Najafgarh police station. During the investigation, it was revealed that two unknown men who reached a godown on a scooter shot at the cleaner, Sanjay," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh said.

The accused have been identified as Sunny Shah,22, Nikhi,24, Lakshay,22, Shiv Prakash,18, and Inderjeet ,26, police said. *—PTI*

FOLLOWING COMPLAINTS

Flights to seat kids up to 12 yrs with parent

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Aviation watchdog DGCA has asked airlines to ensure that children up to the age of 12 years are allocated seats with at least one of their parents or guardians in a flight.

The directive comes against the backdrop of instances of children below the age of 12 years were not seated along with their parents or guardians during flights.

"Airlines shall ensure that children up to the age of 12 years are allocated seats with at least one of their parents/ guardians, who are travelling on the same PNR and a record of the same shall be maintained," the DGCA said in a statement on Tuesday.

In this regard, the regulator has revised the Air Transport Circular titled, 'unbundle of services and fees by scheduled airlines'.

India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and domestic air traffic is on the rise PHOTO: PTI

As per the norms, some services like zero baggage, preferential seating, meals/ snack/ drink charges and charges for carriage of musical instruments are permitted.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said that such unbundled services are provided on an "opt-in" basis by airlines and are not mandatory in nature.

"There is also a provision for auto seat assignment to the passengers who have not selected any seat for web check-in before scheduled departure," the statement said.

India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and domestic air traffic is on the rise *—PTI*

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said that such unbundled services are provided on an "opt-in" basis by airlines and are not mandatory in nature

2 pistols, bullets recovered in Salman Khan firing case

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

The Mumbai police's Crime Branch has recovered two pistols, magazines and bullets from the Tapi river in Gujarat during a search operation to recover weapons allegedly used in the firing outside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's residence, an official said on Tuesday.

They recovered two pistols, three magazines and 13 bullets during the search that began on Monday, the official said.

The two arrested accused, Vicky Gupta, 24, and Sagar Pal, 21, allegedly fired outside 58-year-old Khan's house at the Galaxy Apartment in the Bandra area of Mumbai on 14 April and then fled the spot on a motorbike.

Based on the technical surveillance, they were apprehended on 16 April from the premises of a temple at Mata No Madh near Bhuj town in Gujarat by joint teams of the Mumbai and Kutch police.

According to sources, the duo told the police during interrogation that they threw the weapon into the Tapi river from a railway bridge when they were fleeing to Bhuj in a train after reaching Surat by road from Mumbai following the firing incident. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

RECRUITMENT EXAM

Aspirants wait in a queue before appearing for the Armed Forces recruitment exam 'Agniveer', at an examination centre in Patna, on Tuesday
PHOTO: PTI

Karnataka, Gujarat lead in clean energy transition race

Karnataka and Gujarat continue to lead the race to clean energy transition, but states like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh need to step up efforts, according to a new report released on Tuesday.

The joint report by research organisation, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), and clean energy think tank Ember evaluates the clean electricity transition preparedness at the sub-national level.

The report's authors said Karnataka and Gujarat continue their strong performance across dimensions, effectively integrating renewable energy sources into their power sectors, making strong strides in decarbonisation.

But states like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh need to improve. While these states are in the early stages of their transition, they now need to focus on increasing renewable energy deployment, enhancing short term market participation and strengthening their distribution companies.

The report launch coincides with a spell of intense heat wave sweeping parts of India, leading to the Ministry of Power preparing for a projected peak power demand of 260 gigawatts. Harsh summers also offer the chance to utilise more clean energy like solar power.

"Cyclical weather conditions coupled with faster economic activity is pushing India's peak electricity demand higher every year. While the central government is taking steps to integrate more renewable energy into the grid, states, too, need to be prepared to do so. Gauging sub-national progress now requires constant monitoring of several parameters at the state level. A purely national overview can often overshadow subtle intricacies at the state level, which may stymie the country's electricity transition," the report's contributing author, Vibhuti Garg, Director, South Asia, IEEFA, said.

Karnataka and Gujarat are effectively integrating renewable energy sources ***PHOTO: X/ @PIXABAY***

While the national-level progress towards electricity transition is progressing well, it is far more uneven at the state level.

"Some states have developed progressive steps, such as boosting decentralised renewable energy deployment, promoting solar pumps for agricultural needs, and enhancing storage solutions to ensure more renewable energy in their electricity systems.

"These states should look to accelerate efforts to access benefits of a transition to clean electricity and to ensure they are not left too far behind the better-performing states," the report's contributing author, Aditya Lolla, Asia Programme Director said,

One of the striking findings from the analysis for the 2024 report is that several states are exhibiting preparedness to embrace electricity transition. They perform well in the "Readiness and Performance of the Power Ecosystem" and "Market Enablers" dimensions but need to improve in the "Decarbonisation" dimension.

"Delhi's power system is well-prepared for decarbonisation, while Odisha has robust market enablers to support decarbonisation in the power sector. However, their actual decarbonisation progress so far does not match their strengths in these aspects, highlighting the importance of performing well in both dimensions to effectively achieve decarbonisation goals," co-author Neshwin Rodrigues, Electricity Policy Analyst, Ember, said.

The report also notes that state-level decarbonisation can be further accelerated by strengthening the power ecosystem and having right enablers. Some states that are decarbonising well also lack the right market enablers, others struggle with readiness of their power ecosystems.

Kerala, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra all exhibited considerable progress in certain aspects but also lower performance in other aspects. For example, Kerala and Punjab need to improve when it comes to market enablers for decarbonisation, while Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra need to focus on the readiness of their power ecosystems, according to co-author Tanya Rana, Energy Analyst, IEEFA.

"Despite achieving relative success in decarbonising the sector thus far, states must address deficiencies in readiness and market enablers to sustain their momentum," says Saloni Sachdeva Michael, Energy Specialist, India Clean Energy Transition, IEEFA.

The report recognises the considerable efforts that states are making towards transitioning to clean electricity and recommends some key steps to accelerate the pace of transition.

"India has formulated many central and state-level policy schemes to reinforce its goal of energy independence by supporting various reforms and regulatory interventions across the value chain. However, actual implementation has not been adequate and transparent," she added.

The report also calls for a need to shift focus from national-level to state-level studies to understand the nuances of the electricity transition in India fully.

"Each state faces unique challenges in decarbonising its power system, necessitating tailored policy interventions. By tracking decarbonisation progress, assessing the power system's readiness for transition, and monitoring the advancement of market enablers, state-specific challenges and potential interventions can be better understood," Rodrigues said.

—PTI

SALAR سالار

Ghazipur landfill layers are heating up, says report

Alarms continue to sound over the Ghazipur landfill site in Delhi after a recent fire outbreak. Now, a new study has emerged highlighting the dangers posed by rising temperatures within its different layers.

The Ghazipur landfill, notorious for its immense size and environmental impact, caught fire on 21 April, 2024. The incident blanketed parts of Delhi in toxic smoke, raising health concerns for residents.

High temperatures in the middle layers of the dumpsite are expanding, moving towards the surface, according to the study published in journal Scientific Reports.

"The composition of the input waste must be carefully decided so that the temperature fluctuations are normalised," the researchers wrote in their paper.

A municipal solid waste (MSW) dumpsite becomes an "elevated temperature landfill" when it reaches higher temperatures than usual — often exceeding 55 degrees Celsius or 62.7°C.

Normally, landfills generate heat as waste decomposes. However, when temperatures rise much higher, it's typically due to unusual chemical reactions within the waste. These abnormal reactions are the main cause of high temperatures in these landfills, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Elevated temperatures in landfills can cause changes in landfill gas composition, noxious odours, rapid and severe waste settlement, leachate seeps and outbreaks.

MSW typically comprises waste materials originating from homes, businesses, institutions and industries in urban areas. It includes papers, plastics, glasses, metals, food scraps, clothes, yard waste and other miscellaneous waste materials.

In addition to temperature, the study also measured the properties of leachate and its influence on groundwater.

Leachate is a contaminated liquid (containing high concentrations of inorganic ions, organic molecules, and other harmful substances, including heavy metals and ammonia). The biological decomposition of waste in landfills releases gases, heat, and leachate as a by-product.

The toxic leachate, according to the paper, can contaminate nearby water bodies or percolate to reach groundwater.

After taking monthly leachate samples from May 2021 through October 2021, the researchers found that samples were alkaline, indicating an abundance of alkaline compounds. The conductivity value, which represents the presence of salts, was also found to be high.

The team also collected water samples from handpumps and found that water in the wells near the landfill was more alkaline than the distant ones. The conductivity of groundwater was high at the north of the landfill and at the points near the landfill.

The values indicated that the leachate is seeping into the groundwater, the researchers highlighted.

"The alkaline nature of water and high conductivity values near the landfill suggest a severe risk of groundwater pollution," the researchers wrote in their study.

The team also recorded temperatures at several points in the landfills. Temperature is important to facilitate the biological decomposition of wastes. It should ideally be in the ranges 35-40°C and 50-60°C for two kinds of bacteria involved in breaking down garbage, respectively.

The team also recorded maximum temperatures close to the mid-depths of the landfill. "The Ghazipur landfill can be accepted as an elevated temperature landfill based on the temperature data obtained," the researchers wrote in the paper.

The landfill subsoil could be broadly categorised into three zones based on the temperature.

Zone-1 can be established up to the depth of 30 metres from the surface and has a temperature range of 30-50°C, while Zone-2, which sits between 30 m and 50 m below the surface, witnesses mercury ranging between 60°C and 70 °C.

Zone-3 extends up to a depth of 60 m and is the coolest, where temperatures stay below 30 °C.

—Downtoearth

High temperatures in the middle layers of dumpsite are expanding ***PHOTO: X/ @DOWN2EARTHINDIA***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

'My hell in Myanmar cyber slavery camp': Story of Ravi & Neel

Warning: This story contains details of violence, including sexual violence, which some readers may find disturbing. The name of one of the participants - Ravi - has been changed to protect his identity.

Ravi travelled to Thailand dreaming of a better life for him and his new wife.

Instead, the 24-year-old Sri Lankan found himself trapped in the Myanmar jungle, being tortured for refusing to help trick lonely, rich men out of thousands in so-called romance scams.

"They stripped off my clothes, made me sit on a chair and gave my leg electric shocks. I thought it was the end of my life.

"I spent 16 days in a cell for not obeying them," he continued. "They only gave me water mixed with cigarette butts and ash to drink."

But that was not the worst of it, he says. Five or six days in, two girls were brought in and gang raped in front of him.

"When I witnessed it, I feared, 'What will these people do to me?' It was then that I doubted they would let me live," Ravi said.

In August 2023, the UN estimated that more than 120,000 people, most of them men from Asia, had been forced to work in scam centres in Myanmar like the one Ravi found himself in.

The centres are fed by a steady stream of aspiring migrant workers from all over the world. The Sri Lankan authorities say they know of at least 56 of its citizens alone who are trapped in four different locations in Myanmar, although the Sri Lankan ambassador to Myanmar, Janaka Bandara, told that eight of them had recently been rescued with the help of the Myanmar authorities.

Ravi was one of those aspiring migrants, tempted by the promise of a job in data entry with a basic salary of 370,000 rupees ($1,200).

The computer specialist jumped at the chance - it was money he couldn't dream of in Sri Lanka, which has been hit by an economic crisis.

And so, he took out a loan of 250,000 rupees ($815) to pay the recruiter.

Ravi arrived in Bangkok in early 2023, but was immediately sent to Mae Sot, a city in western Thailand.

"We were taken to a hotel, but soon handed over to two gunmen. They took us to Myanmar crossing a river," Ravi explained.

While scam centres have popped up across South East Asia, they have been particularly prevalent in Myanmar, where they have generated billions of dollars for both Chinese underworld crime syndicates, and the various armed groups operating in border towns.

Ravi was locked in a cell after refusing to work for the gangs ***PHOTO: BBC/NOPPORN WICHACHAT***

In this particular scam centre, the focus was so-called romance scams. The cost of such scams to victims is hard to establish, but the FBI found in its 2023 Internet Crime Report that there had been more than 17,000 complaints of confidence or romance scams in the US, with losses totalling $652m.

According to Ravi, he and the others were forced to work up to 22 hours a day - getting only one day off each month - and told to target wealthy men, particularly in Western countries, by building romantic relationships using stolen phone numbers, social media and messaging platforms.

They contacted the victims directly, typically making them believe the first message - often just a simple "hi" - was sent by mistake.

Some people ignored the messages, Ravi says, but lonely people or those looking for sex often took the bait.

When they did, a group of young women at the camp were forced to take explicit pictures to further entice the target.Disobey, and you faced - as Ravi had - beatings and torture. But there are ways out: you can pay.

One man who did exactly that was Neel Vijay, a 21-year-old from Maharashtra in western India, who was trafficked to Myanmar along with five other Indian men and two Filipino women in August 2022.

He told that a childhood friend of his mother had promised him a call centre job in Bangkok, and had charged them an agent's fee of 150,000 Indian rupees ($1,800).

Neel's family paid the gang 600,000 Indian rupees ($7,190) to release him after he refused to be involved in the scam, but not before he had witnessed the brutal punishment meted out to people who either didn't meet the targets or couldn't afford to pay the ransom.

After his release, the Thai authorities helped him get back to India, where his family has taken legal action against the local recruiters.

Ravi was also passed between gangs during the six months he was trapped in Myanmar.

.Finally, the "Chinese boss" came to see Ravi and offered him "one last chance" to work again - a new opportunity due to his expertise in computer software.

For a further four months, Ravi managed Facebook accounts set up using a VPN, artificial intelligence apps, and 3D video cameras.

The gang leader agreed to let him go if Ravi paid a ransom of 600,000 rupees ($2,000) and an additional 200,000 rupees ($650) for crossing the river and entering Thailand.

His parents borrowed money - putting their house up as collateral - and transferred it to him, and Ravi was taken back to Mae Sot.

When he was fined 20,000 Thai baht ($550) at the airport for not having a visa, Ravi's parents had to take out a further loan.

"When I arrived in Sri Lanka, I had a debt of 1,850,000 rupees ($6,100)," he said.

He may be back home now, yet Ravi barely sees his new bride.

"I work day and night in a garage to pay off this debt. We have pawned both of our wedding rings to pay the interest," he said bitterly.

—BBC News

PHOTO: BBC

Dominica HC overturns ban on same-sex relations

ROSEAU, 23 APRIL

Dominica's High Court has overturned a ban on consensual same-sex relations in the Caribbean island nation. The court ruled parts of the law that criminalised same-sex activity went against the country's constitution. A gay man living in Dominica who brought the case said the law violated his constitutional rights. LGBTQ activists welcomed the decision, hailing it as "a significant milestone in the ongoing struggle for LGBTQ rights in the Caribbean". The court ruled that sections 14 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act, which criminalised consensual same-sex activity between adults, were unconstitutional. ***—BBC News***

German far-right party aide held in China spy probe

BERLIN, 23 APRIL

Prosecutors have arrested a man working for a far-right politician on suspicion of spying for China. They have identified the man as Jian G, 43, named by German media as an assistant to AfD MEP and European election candidate Maximilian Krah. Prosecutors say he was arrested in the eastern city of Dresden. They allege he passed information about the European Parliament to Chinese intelligence. Jian G is also suspected of spying on Chinese opposition figures in Germany. Krah said he learned of his aide's arrest from the press and that if the allegations were found to be true then his employment would be terminated immediately. "Espionage for a foreign state is a serous accusation," his statement said. ***—BBC News***

10 dead after Malaysia navy helicopters collide

KUALA LUMPUR, 23 APRIL

Two Malaysian navy helicopters collided in mid-air as they flew in formation during a rehearsal for a military parade, killing all 10 crew on board. One of the aircraft clipped the rotor of the other before the two crashed into the ground, footage published on local media showed. The incident took place at 09:30 local time (02:30 BST) in the Malaysian town of Lumut, which is home to a Royal Malaysian Navy base. There are no known survivors. "All victims were confirmed dead on site and the remains were sent to the [Lumut] Military Hospital for identification," said the Royal Malaysian Navy. It added that it would form a committee to investigate the cause of the incident. One of the helicopters, a HOM M503-3 with seven people on board, is believed to have crashed onto a running track. The other, a Fennec M502-6 carrying the other three victims, crashed into a swimming pool nearby. ***—BBC***

Aus PM calls Elon Musk an 'arrogant billionaire'

SYDNEY, 23 APRIL

Australia's leader has called Elon Musk an "arrogant billionaire" in an escalating feud over X's reluctance to remove footage of a church stabbing. On Monday, an Australian court ordered Mr Musk's social media firm - formerly called Twitter - to hide videos of last week's attack in Sydney. X previously said it would comply "pending a legal challenge". 3Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's criticism followed Musk using a meme to accuse his government of censorship. On Tuesday, Albanese told ABC News that Musk "thinks he'sabove the law but also above common decency". Last week Australia's eSafety Commissioner threatened X and other social media companies with hefty fines if they did not remove videos of the stabbing at the Assyrian Christ the Good Shepherd church. ***—BBC***

Gaza protest: Hundreds of US students held

Police moved to break up an encampment at Columbia varsity; in-person classes cancelled

WASHINGTON, 23 APRIL

Protests over the war in Gaza have taken hold at a handful of elite US universities as officials scramble to defuse demonstrations.

Police moved to break up an encampment at New York University (NYU) on Monday night, making a number of arrests. Dozens of students were arrested at Yale earlier in the day, while Columbia University cancelled in-person classes.

The wave of demos has been marred by alleged antisemitic incidents, which have been condemned by the White House. Demonstrations and heated debates about the Israel-Gaza war and free speech have rocked US campuses since the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October, which prompted Israel's campaign in Gaza. In the US, students on both sides say there has been a rise in both antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents since then. When asked about the rallies on Monday, President Joe Biden said he condemned both "the antisemitic protests" as well as "those who don't understand what's going on with the Palestinians".

A faculty rally in favor of academic free speech is held in the main quad at Columbia University in New York on Tuesday ***PHOTO: UPI***

The protest movement was thrust into the spotlight last week after New York City police were called out to Columbia's campus and arrested more than 100 demonstrators. Rallies have spread since then. In addition to NYU and Yale, encampments have been set up at the University of California at Berkeley, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of Michigan, Emerson College and Tufts.

Like their peers, the NYU protesters are calling on their institution to disclose and divest its "finances and endowments from weapons manufacturers and companies with an interest in the Israeli occupation".

Meanwhile, another who stood across the street with an Israeli flag said: "There's one side here and one side of history. This is the right side here." NYU said 50 people were involved in the main encampment outside the business school. It described the protest as unauthorised, saying this disrupted classes. Police started arresting them on Monday evening; they have not provided a number. *—BBC News*

Taiwan rattled by at least 80 quakes

TAIPEI, 23 APRIL

At least 80 earthquakes struck the island republic of Taiwan early Tuesday, the strongest having a magnitude of 6.1, according to the US Geological Survey.

There were no reports of casualties in the quakes, although there were further damages to two multi-story buildings that had been evacuated following a magnitude 7.4 quake that hit the island earlier this month, killing 13 people and injuring over 1,000. That earthquake was centred along the coast of the rural and mountainous Hualien County.

It was the strongest earthquake in the past 25 years in Taiwan and was followed by hundreds of aftershocks. The quakes Tuesday's are considered the latest of those. According to the USGS, Tuesday's quake of 6.1 magnitude had its epicentre 28 kilometres south of the city of Hualien, at a dept of 10.7 kilometres.

The half-dozen other quakes ranged from magnitude 4.5 to magnitude 6, all near Hualien. Taiwan's own earthquake monitoring centre put the magnitudes of the initial quake at 6.3. Such small discrepancies are common between monitoring stations.

The largest among them were two earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 and 6.3 that occurred at 2:26 am and 2:32 am Tuesday, respectively, according to the Taiwan centre. Numerous of the scores of aftershocks could be felt on the upper floors of an apartment buildings in the capital Taipei, about 150 kilometres across steep mountains to the northwest. The Full Hotel in downtown Hualien partially collapsed during the quakes and was left leaning at a severe angle, However, it had been undergoing renovations and was unoccupied at the time. The nearby Tong Shuai Building was also empty, having been marked for demolition after being heavily damaged in the 3 April quake. *—AP*

In this image from a video, roads in Hualien, Taiwan are cordoned off after a cluster of earthquakes struck the island early on Tuesday ***PHOTO: AP/PTI***

US FLIES NAVY AIRCRAFT THRO' TAIWAN STRAIT

TAIPEI, 17 APRIL

The US 7th Fleet said a Navy P-8A Poseidon flew through the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, a day after US and Chinese defence chiefs held their first talks since November 2022 in an effort to reduce regional tensions. The patrol and reconnaissance plane "transited the Taiwan Strait in international airspace", the 7th Fleet said in a news release.

"By operating within the Taiwan Strait in accordance with international law, the United States upholds the navigational rights and freedoms of all nations," the release said. Although it's in international waters, China considers the passage of foreign military aircraft and ships through it a challenge to its sovereignty.

China claims the island of Taiwan, threatening to defend it by force if necessary despite US military support for the island. China scrambled fighter jets to "monitor the US plane's passage" and operated "in accordance of laws and regulations, naval Col Li Xi, spokesperson for the Chinese People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theatre Command, said. *—AP*

Aid for, Israel, Taiwan, Ukraine waiting for approval

WASHINGTON, 23 APRIL

The Senate is returning to Washington on Tuesday to vote on USD 95 billion in war aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, taking the final steps in Congress to send the legislation to President Joe Biden's desk after months of delays and contentious internal debate over how involved the United States should be abroad.

The USD 61 billion for Ukraine comes as the war-torn country desperately needs new firepower and as Russian President Vladimir Putin has stepped up his attacks. Soldiers have struggled to hold the front lines as Russia has seized the momentum on the battlefield and forced Ukraine to cede significant territory.

Biden told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy the US send air defence weaponry. The legislation also would send USD 26 billion in wartime assistance to Israel and humanitarian relief to citizens of Gaza, and USD 8 billion to counter China in Taiwan. The foreign aid portion of the bill is similar to what the Senate passed in February with some minor changes and additions, including the TikTok bill and a stipulation that USD 9 billion of the economic assistance to Ukraine is in the form of "forgivable loans."

The growing fault line in the GOP between those conservatives who are sceptical of the aid and the more traditional, "Reagan-era" Republicans who strongly support it may prove to be career-defining for the two top Republican leaders. Senate GOP Leader Mitch McConnell, who has made the Ukraine aid a top priority, said last month that he would step down from leadership after becoming increasingly distanced from many in his conference on the issue and others.

The revised House package also included several Republican priorities that were acceptable to Democrats to get the bill passed. Those include proposals that allow the US to seize frozen Russian central bank assets to rebuild Ukraine; impose sanctions on Iran, Russia, China and criminal organisations that traffic fentanyl; and could eventually ban TikTok in the US if the owner, ByteDance Ltd, doesn't sell. *—AP*

5 migrants including child die trying to cross English Channel

PARIS, 23 APRIL

At least 5 people have died while crossing the English Channel, according to French media, hours after the UK approved the migrant deportation bill.

The Voix du Nord newspaper said the bodies were discovered at the Wimereaux beach in northern France on Tuesday. The rescue operation is ongoing and helicopters and boats have been deployed, according to the regional newspaper.

About 100 migrants have been rescued and placed aboard a French navy ship. They will be taken to the port of Boulogne, the paper said. This came only hours after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's latest effort to send some migrants on a one-way ticket to Rwanda finally won approval from Parliament. The UK government plans to deport some of those who enter the country illegally as a deterrent to migrants who risk their lives in leaky, inflatable boats in hopes that they will be able to claim asylum once they reach Britain.

Human rights groups have described the legislation as inhumane and cruel. Both the United Nations refugee agency and the Council of Europe called on the UK Tuesday to rethink its plans for fears they could damage international cooperation on tackling the global migrant crisis.

Migrants trying to cross the busy English Channel face drownings and sinking among other deadly incidents, often aboard crowded boats. *—AP*

Bodies were discovered at the Wimereaux beach***PHOTO: @TRTWorldNow***

Pak's Khyber CM holds talk with TTP militants

PESHAWAR, 23 APRIL

Contrary to Pakistan's federal government policy of not holding "meaningful dialogue" with the banned Pakistani Taliban, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has called for negotiations with the dreaded terrorist group to maintain lasting peace in the restive region.

After Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) called off its ceasefire in November 2022, Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also in Balochistan and Punjab, which borders the province. Terror attacks have also reached as far as Islamabad and Karachi.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Gandapur said talks with the militants are necessary for ensuring peace in the province and a viable strategy at the national level should be evolved to halt further damage to the region.

"We fully support meaningful dialogue with the militant organisation to improve the law and order situation in the province," he said. Evolving a national-level strategy is a must to end the menace of terrorism. Dialogues with the militant outfit should be held within the parameters of the outlined national security strategy to end the problem on a sound footing, the chief minister from jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, said. However, all efforts remained inconclusive. After the regime change in Islamabad in 2022, the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif discontinued the talk process with TTP and decided to go for military operations against the terrorists. In 2023, Pakistan decided not to support the Afghan Taliban's case at the international level or extend any other assistance following Kabul's failure to neutralise the banned TTP terror group. *—PTI*

Maldivians want to preserve sovereignty: Prez

MALE, 23 APRIL

Armed with a 'super majority' in the parliamentary polls, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has said the international community will now understand where the Maldivians stand, especially on the issue of sovereignty and freedom.

The pro-China Maldivian president's statement came at a celebratory event on Monday, a day after the People's National Congress (PNC), led by him, won 68 out of 93 seats in Sunday's polls and its coalition partners Maldives National Party (MNP) and Maldives Development Alliance (MDA) won one and two seats, respectively, taking the total to more than two-thirds in the People's Majlis.

A majority in Parliament would mean that Muizzu's party has control not just over lawmaking but also over the legislature which ratifies the laws; which till now had two opposing coalitions and saw several instances of a conflict between the government and the legislature.

PNC's "super majority" in parliamentary elections is being seen as a strong endorsement of his pro-Beijing foreign policy, as both India and China closely watched the outcome of the polls in the strategically-located archipelago nation in the Indian Ocean.

Mohamed Muizzu ***PHOTO: ANI***

Muizzu, 45, rode to power last year on the 'India Out' plank and since assuming office in November 2023, has visited China and cemented Male's ties with Beijing, including in the defence sector. Ahead of the parliamentary elections, main Opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), led by pro-India former president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had advocated restoring ties with India. MDP, however, won only 15 seats. Muizzu, who has forced the repatriation of 88 Indian military personnel manning three aviation platforms gifted by India to the Maldives, two of the three batches have already left, said, "We are a proud nation that loves sovereignty and freedom, which we have shown to the international community as well."

The parliamentary election result was also to prove that the Maldivians want "autonomy in choosing their future, without foreign coercion," President Muizzu said. *—PTI*

AMERICAN ELECTIONS

Donald Trump hush money was 'pure election fraud'

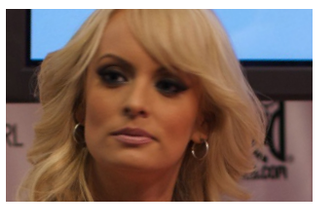
WASHINGTON, 23 APRIL

Former president Donald Trump faces serious charges in two separate cases over whether he attempted to subvert the Constitution by overturning the results of a fair election and illegally remain in power.

Yet it's a New York case centred on payments to silence an adult film actress that might provide the only legal reckoning this year on whether he tried to undermine a pillar of American democracy. Trump is charged in the so-called hush money case with trying to falsify business records, but it was hard to tell that as the trial opened Monday.

Lead prosecutor Matthew Colangelo wasted little time during opening statements tying the case to Trump's campaigning during his first run for the presidency. He said the payments made to Stormy Daniels amounted to "a criminal scheme to corrupt the 2016 Presidential election."

Whether the jury accepts that connection will be pivotal for Trump's fate. The presumptive nominee faces charges related to falsifying business records that would typically be misdemeanours unless the alleged act could be tied to another crime.



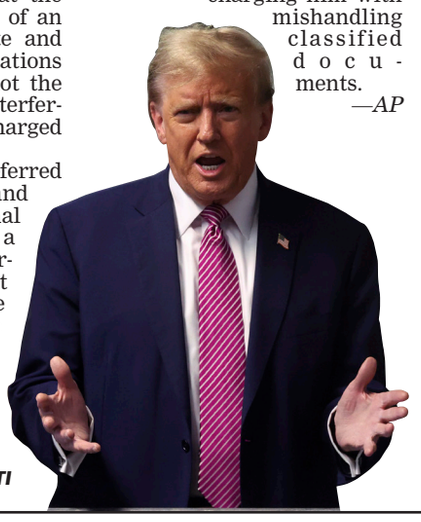
Stormy Daniels (Stage name) ***PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS***

Prosecutors were able to charge them as felonies because they allege that the false records were part of an effort to cover up state and federal election law violations — though that's still not the type of direct election interference that Trump is charged with elsewhere.

Trump himself has referred to the New York trial and the three other criminal cases against him as a form of election interference, suggesting without evidence that they're part of a Democratic plan to undermine his campaign to return to the White House.

He faces a four-count federal indictment in Washington, DC, in connection with his actions in the run-up to the violent attack on the US Capitol by his supporters on 6 January, 2021.

He and others were charged in Georgia with violating the state's anti-racketeering law by scheming to illegally overturn his 2020 loss to Joe Biden. He has pleaded not guilty to all the charges against him in those cases and a fourth charging him with mishandling classified documents. *—AP*



Former President Donald Trump speaks with the media following proceedings in his trial ***PHOTO: PTI***

Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.33 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

The rupee appreciated by 3 paise to close at 83.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday on positive domestic markets and a soft American currency. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.37 against the greenback. The unit hit an intraday high of 83.28 and a low of 83.39 against the greenback. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.33 (provisional) against the dollar, 3 paise higher from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee appreciated by 8 paise to close at 83.36 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 106.06, on easing tensions between Israel and Iran. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.29 per cent to USD 87.25 per barrel. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold plunges 1,450 to ₹72K, silver dips by Rs 2,300

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Declining for the second day in a row, gold prices tumbled by Rs 1,450 to Rs 72,200 per 10g in the local market here due to profit-taking by traders and weak global trends. Silver prices also tanked by Rs 2,300 per kg. According to HDFC Securities, gold prices declined by Rs 1,450 to Rs 72,200 per 10 grams in Delhi. The precious metal had closed at Rs 73,650 per 10g in the previous session. Silver prices nosedived by Rs 2,300 to Rs 83,500 per kg. In the previous close, it had ended at Rs 85,800 per kg. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,310 per ounce, down USD 55 from the previous close. Gold prices dipped further on Tuesday amid easing tension in the Middle East and signs that the US Federal Reserve will keep rates higher for longer, crimping demand. —*PTI*

Air India enters into codeshare pact with Nippon Airways

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Air India has entered into a codeshare partnership with Japan's All Nippon Airways. With the codeshare, effective for travel from 23 May, Air India and All Nippon Airways passengers can fly to their desired destination by combining those flights between India and Japan with a single ticket. Air India will add its 'AI' designator code on ANA's flights between Tokyo Haneda and Delhi as well as Tokyo Narita and Mumbai. ANA will add its 'NH' designator code on Air India's flight between Tokyo Narita and Delhi, a release said on Tuesday. Both airlines are considering further expanding their cooperation on additional routes. Now, Tata Group-owned Air India, which is expanding its presence, has codeshare partnerships with 15 airlines, including ANA. —*PTI*

L&T manufactures hydrotreating reactor for Mexico

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Engineering and construction conglomerate Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday said it has manufactured a hydrotreating reactor for the Antonio Dovali Jaime Refinery at Salina Cruz, in Mexico. The reactor has been dispatched for Mexico from the company's AM Naik Heavy Engineering Complex at Hazira in Gujarat. The reactor uses hydrotreating process, which is a catalytic conversion in petroleum refining, among others, for removing impurities such as nitrogen and sulphur compounds from hydrocarbon streams. Larsen & Toubro is a USD 23 billion Indian multinational engaged in engineering, procurement, and construction projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services. It operates in over 50 countries worldwide. —*PTI*

WeWork Global to sell entire 27% stake in India

WeWork India had said US business' fall would not impact it

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Co-working firm WeWork Global, which has filed for bankruptcy in the US, is in talks with potential investors to sell its entire 27 per cent stake in WeWork India to monetise its investments, sources said.

WeWork India has been maintaining that the development in the US business would not impact Indian operations in any manner.

Bengaluru-based real estate firm Embassy Group, which holds the remaining 73 per cent WeWork India, which started operations in 2017, has over 8 million square feet of assets signed across 54 locations in New Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Gurugram, Noida, Pune, and Hyderabad.

WeWork India had posted a turnover of Rs 1,400 crore during the 2022-23 fiscal year.

WeWork India had posted a turnover of Rs 1,400 crore during the 2022-23 PHOTO: PTI

In June 2021, WeWork Global invested USD 100 million in WeWork India to pick a 27 per cent stake. The investments helped Indian business to tide over the financial difficulties during the COVID pandemic, which had severely affected the office market.

When contacted, WeWork India CEO Karan Virwani declined to comment.

Sources said, WeWork India will continue to use the 'WeWork' brand even if WeWork Global sells its entire stake and exits from the India business. WeWork India will pay some fees to use the brand name.

In November last year, WeWork Global filed for bankruptcy in the US and also started a comprehensive reorganization and restructuring process to cut debt and strengthen its balance sheet.

NYSE-listed WeWork Inc had said that its centres located outside the US and Canada will not be part of this proceedings.

Softbank-backed WeWork Inc, which was founded in 2010 and once valued at USD 47 billion, had reported a net loss of USD 696 million in the first half of 2023. —*PTI*

SHARES CLIMB 8%

Vi approves offer price of ₹11 per equity share for ₹18K cr FPO

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Telecom operator Vodafone Idea's (VIL) board has fixed the FPO offer price at Rs 11 per equity share, according to a regulatory filing.

The anchor investor offer price of Rs 11 per equity share has also been greenlit by the board.

Debt-laden telecom operator Vodafone Idea Ltd has raised Rs 18,000 crore pulling off India's largest-ever follow-on public offering (FPO) as the issue got subscribed nearly seven times after institutional investors poured in money, stock exchange data showed on Monday evening.

The fundraise will arm VIL with an ammo to improve its competitive positioning in the Indian telecom market, where it trails Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel, by a wide margin.

PHOTO: PTI

The prospectus has been filed with the Registrar of Companies, Gujarat at Ahmedabad, and submitted to the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Shares of Vodafone Idea Ltd on Tuesday climbed nearly 8 per cent, a day after the telecom operator raised Rs 18,000 crore in India's largest ever follow-on offering (FPO).

The stock jumped 7.83 per cent to Rs 13.98 on the BSE.

At the NSE, it climbed 7.75 per cent to Rs 13.90 apiece.At the close of the offering on Monday, as many as 8,011.29 crore shares were sought, 6.99 times of the issue size.

Together with Rs 5,400 crore collected from anchor investors by selling 490 crore shares prior to the market share, it raised the targeted Rs 18,000 crore.

The FPO is the largest ever. Prior to this, the largest FPO in the Indian market was a Rs 15,000 crore share sale by YES Bank in 2020. —*PTI*

India tops in GenAI adoption, to see rise in investments

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

India leads globally in adopting GenAI technologies as a vast percentage of organisations incorporate GenAI in operations, said a report.

The report also claims majority of the populace expects increased investments and budget allocations towards Gen AI in the next 2-3 years.

Search analytics firm Elastic on Monday released the Generative AI Report that gathered insights from 3,200 IT decision-makers and influencers across sectors in the US, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. In the Asia Pacific and Japan region, 1,200 were surveyed, including 300 from India.

According to the report, 81 per cent of Indian organisations have already implemented GenAI, making India the leader in adopting generative artificial intelligence technologies.

The study also predicted promising investment trends in near future, with about 94 per cent of respondents anticipating increased investments and budget allocations towards GenAI initiatives in the next 2-3 years.

PHOTO: PTI

- India leads globally in adopting GenAI technologies as a vast percentage of organisations incorporate GenAI in ops, said a report.

However, almost all of the respondents expressed concerns about processing and using their data.

"As many as 99 per cent of respondents expressed concerns about processing and using their data, highlighting the need for organisations to work with GenAI providers who can help safeguard sensitive information. The report further observed that 73 per cent of respondents in India were confident that conversational data search capabilities would significantly enhance operational efficiency. —*PTI*

UNITED SPIRITS GETS ₹29.69 CR VAT DEMAND

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

United Spirits Ltd on Tuesday said excise and taxation authority has raised a VAT demand of Rs 29.69 crore on it after disallowing the benefit of credit notes claimed in the financial year 2020-2021.

The company has received a VAT assessment order from the Excise and Taxation Officer-cum-Assessing Authority, Ward-I, Palwal, Haryana for FY 2020-2021.A VAT demand for Rs 29.69 crore, including interest of Rs 13.47 crore, has been raised, United Spirits said in a regulatory filing.

The department has disallowed the benefit of credit notes as claimed in the return and raised a demand on the company, it added. —*PTI*

PHOTO: IANS

'Banks don't have power to issue look out circulars'

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

Bombay High Court on Tuesday ruled that public sector banks do not have the power in law to issue Look Out Circulars (LOCs) against default borrowers.

The court's verdict would render all LOCs issued by such banks against defaulters as quashed.

A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Madhav Jamdar held as unconstitutional the clause of an office memorandum issued by the central government empowering the chairpersons of public sector banks to issue LOCs against default borrowers.

Advocate Aditya Thakker, appearing for the Union government, sought High Court to stay its order but the bench refused.

The court passed its verdict on a bunch of petitions challenging validity of the said clause.

The bench said the Bureau of Immigration shall not act upon such LOCs (issued by banks against defaulters).

PHOTO: PTI

The court also said its judgment would not affect the orders issued against any defaulter by a tribunal or a criminal court restraining them from travelling abroad.

While the office memorandum issued by the Centre was not ultra vires the Constitution, the clause empowering the chairperson of a public sector bank to issue LOC was "arbitrary and without power in law", the court said.

The Centre's office memorandum, in an amendment made in 2018, empowered the public sector banks to issue LOCs in the "economic interest of India". —*PTI*

SENSEX AT 74,059.89

Reliance lost over 1 per cent to end at Rs 2,918.50 per scrip PHOTO: PTI

Markets climb for 3rd day on firm global cues

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for the third session in a row on Tuesday, following gains in telecom, tech and consumer durable shares amid a firm trend in the global markets.

After rallying over 400 points, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 89.83 points or 0.12 per cent higher at 73,738.45. During the session, it jumped 411.27 points or 0.55 per cent to 74,059.89. Trimming most of its early gains, the NSE Nifty ended 31.60 points or 0.14 per cent up at 22,368. During the day, it climbed 111.15 points or 0.49 per cent to 22,447.55. Heavy selling pressure in index heavyweight Reliance Industries, mainly due to profit booking, dragged market indices lower. Reliance lost over one per cent to end at Rs 2,918.50 per scrip. From the Sensex basket, Bharti Airtel, Nestle, Maruti, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Asian Paints and State Bank of India were the major gainers. Sun Pharma, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, JSW Steel, Tech Mahindra and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading with gains. Wall Street ended in positive territory on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.41 per cent to USD 87.36 a barrel. The BSE benchmark climbed 560.29 points or 0.77 per cent to settle at 73,648.62 on Monday. The NSE Nifty went up by 189.40 points or 0.86 per cent to 22,336.40. —*PTI*

INDIA SEEKS DETAILS FROM S'PORE & HONG KONG ON MDH, EVEREST

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

India, the world's largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices, has sought details from food safety regulators of Singapore and Hong Kong, which has banned certain spices of Indian brands MDH and Everest due to quality concerns.

The Commerce Ministry has also directed Indian embassies in both Singapore and Hong Kong to send a detailed report on the matter.

It also sought details from the firms -- MDH and Everest, whose products have been banned for allegedly containing pesticide 'ethylene oxide' beyond permissible limits.

Technical details, analytical reports and the details of the exporters whose consignments have been rejected have been sought from Embassies at Singapore and Hong Kong, the official said.

Details have also been sought from Singapore Food Agency and Centre for Food Safety, and Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Hong Kong, the official added.

The Ministry official mentioned that an industry consultation is also scheduled to discuss the issue of mandatory testing of ethylene oxide in spice shipments to Singapore and Hong Kong. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

NSE TO LAUNCH DERIVATIVE CONTRACTS ON NIFTY NEXT 50

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

National Stock Exchange (NSE) is set to introduce derivative contracts on Nifty Next 50 index from Wednesday.

This came following an approval received from markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

The Nifty Next 50 index represents 50 companies from Nifty 100 after excluding the Nifty 50 companies.

Under the derivative contract, the exchange would offer three serial monthly index futures and index options contract cycles. The cash-settled derivatives contracts would expire on the last Friday of the expiry month.

As of March 2024, the Nifty Next 50 index had top sector representation from the financial services sector with 23.76 per cent weight followed by the capital goods sector with 11.91 per cent and consumer services with 11.57 per cent. The index was introduced on 1 January, 1997. —*PTI*

EV industry to get Rs 25K cr investment

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The auto component industry is expected to invest over Rs 25,000 crore in the next 3-4 years to expand production of electric vehicle parts, rating agency Icra said on Tuesday.

EV penetration in the country has reached 4.7 per cent in FY2024, with much of it driven by the electric two-wheeler segment, although e-three-wheelers and electric buses have also contributed to the same, it said.

There has been substantial localisation in traction motors, control units, and battery management systems over the years, Icra said.

However, advanced chemistry batteries, which remain the most critical and the costliest component, accounting for almost 35-40 per cent of the vehicle price, are imported, it added.

PHOTO: PTI

The low localisation levels give rise to manufacturing opportunities for domestic auto component suppliers, it said.

About 45-50 per cent of this would be towards battery cells,. The PLI scheme, recent e-vehicle policy and state incentives would also contribute to accelerating the capex.

- The auto component industry is expected to invest over Rs 25,000 crore in the next 3-4 years to expand production of electric vehicle parts, rating agency Icra said on Tuesday.

The rating agency expects EVs to account for around 25 per cent of domestic two-wheeler and 15 per cent of passenger vehicle sales by 2030.

Accordingly, the rating agency projects the domestic electric two-wheeler component market potential to exceed Rs 1 lakh crore by 2030, while the e-passenger vehicle component segment is foreseen at another Rs 50,000 crore at least, in terms of revenue potential for ancillaries, Icra said. —*ANI*

SURPASSING CHINA

Jio is now world's largest mobile operator

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

Reliance Jio, the telecom giant of India, has become the world's largest mobile operator in terms of data traffic, surpassing China Mobile.

The announcement came on Monday as Jio revealed its quarterly results, showcasing staggering numbers and milestones achieved in various segments.

As of March 2024, Jio boasts a subscriber base of 481.8 million, out of which 108 million subscribers are on Jio's True5G Standalone network. The number reflects Jio's stronghold in the Indian telecom market.

According to a press release, the total traffic on the Jio network has reached 40.9 Exabytes, marking a 35.2 per cent year-on-year increase.

This surge is attributed to the growing adoption of 5G and Home services.

Notably, 28 per cent of the traffic comes from 5G subscribers, indicating a swift transition towards next-generation connectivity.

Jio boasts a subscriber base of 481.8 million PHOTO: PTI

Additionally, Jio's Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) services have contributed significantly to the data traffic.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a dramatic 2.4x increase in annual data traffic, with per capita monthly data usage skyrocketing to 28.7 GB from just 13.3 GB three years ago. This surge underscores the growing reliance on digital connectivity in India.

The company's retail arm, Reliance Retail, also showed robust growth, with a 36 per cent increase in footfalls and strong digital commerce platforms offering a broad brand catalogue.

In addition to its telecom and retail segments, Reliance Industries Limited has shown resilience in its Oil to Chemicals (O2C) segment, despite challenging market conditions.

The KG-D6 block has achieved significant production milestones, accounting for 30 per cent of India's domestic gas production.

The consolidated EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) at Rs 178,677 crore, while the consolidated Profit Before Tax (PBT) has surpassed Rs 100,000 crore.

The company's market capitalization has crossed Rs 20,00,000 crore, further solidifying its position as one of India's most valuable companies. —*ANI*

- Reliance Jio, the telecom giant of India, has become the world's largest mobile operator in terms of data traffic, surpassing China Mobile.

DC EYE IMPROVED BOWLING EFFORT

Rishabh Pant's captaincy under scrutiny

NEW DELHI, 24 APRIL

Rishabh Pant's leadership skills will be under scrutiny as a struggling Delhi Capitals would seek a much-improved performance from their bowlers when they take on an inconsistent Gujarat Titans in the IPL here on Wednesday.

It was not an ideal homecoming for Pant as after two consecutive wins, DC slumped to a 67-run loss against a marauding Sunrisers Hyderabad at home on Saturday.

The loss saw DC slip to the eighth position with three wins and five defeats. They very well know they can't afford to falter if they want to keep their play-off hopes alive.

Against SRH, Pant erred in his decisions a few times, starting from the toss as he misjudged the dew factor at the Arun Jaitley Stadium and decided to bowl first.

Pant's decision to hand the second over to Lalit Yadav, was even more contentious as SRH were off to a blazing start, scoring a record 125 for no loss in the powerplay.

On the personal front, Pant wasn't in his element as he struggled for timing en route a painstaking 44 off 35 balls while chasing a mammoth score.

To chase a target of 267, a team needs its openers to fire from ball one but Prithvi Shaw and David Warner haven't been too successful.

Young Jake Fraser-McGurk smashed 65 off just 18 balls to keep DC in the hunt but he lacked support from the other end, even though Abhishek Porel (42 off 22) tried his best.

DC bowlers were taken to the cleaners by SRH and they need to pull up their socks.

Left-arm seamer Khaleel Ahmed's, whose career has been dogged by inconsistency, decision to employ short stuff in the opening over completely backfired

With short boundaries at the Kotla, DC bowlers need to pitch it up.

Pace spearhead Anrich Nortje has been completely off-colour this season and DC would be desperately hoping veteran Ishant Sharma returns after missing the last game due to a back spasm.

Kuldeep Yadav has been DC's best bowler in the season so far with 10 wickets from five games at an economy rate of 7.60. But he didn't have a very good outing against SRH.

Even though he had the highest number of dot balls (8) among DC bowlers, he also conceded the maximum numbers of sixes -- 7.

GT have also been equally inconsistent under new skipper Shubman Gill. But the three-wicket win over Punjab Kings in their last game has helped the former champions move up slightly in the pecking order at sixth spot from four wins and as many losses.

They would be hoping to continue the winning momentum to scale up the leaderboard and be in contention for a play-off berth. —*PTI*

Rishabh Pant's leadership skills will be under scrutiny **PHOTO: PTI**

TODAY'S MATCH

GUJARAT TITANS vs DELHI CAPITALS

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi

PHOTO: PTI

Jaiswal batted with maturity against MI: Lara

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Impressed with the maturity shown by Yashasvi Jaiswal, West Indies cricket legend Brian Lara said the youngster's knock against Mumbai Indians was well put together as he perfectly balanced taking his time with shots while still maintaining a high strike-rate. Jaiswal ended a barren run by his lofty standards with his first ton of this IPL to power Rajasthan Royals to a nine-wicket win over MI here. "Yeah, beautiful. But the fact of the matter is, he's taking his time, looking at the ball right from up at the back, and he's playing cricketing shots.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

ISL announces tentative venue for 2023-24 final

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Indian Super League (ISL) on Tuesday announced that the 2023-24 season final is scheduled for 4 May and will be played at the home ground of the higher-ranked team in the league amongst the finalists. Mohun Bagan pipped Mumbai City FC in a thriller on 15 April to bag the League Winner's Shield, with FC Goa finishing third. Kolkata, Mumbai, and Goa are therefore in contention to host the ISL Final. Odisha FC and FC Goa emerged victorious in their knockout matches against Kerala Blasters FC and Chennaiyin FC respectively, securing their places in the ISL 2023-24 semifinals. The semifinal action kicks off with Bagan Super Giant facing Odisha FC in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday.—*PTI*

PHOTO: AFP

Sreeja surpasses Manika as India's No.1 TT player

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

CWG mixed doubles champion Sreeja Akula on Tuesday became the top-ranked Indian woman table tennis player after rising to a career-high rank of 38 in the latest ITTF Chart, replacing Manika Batra. Sreeja climbed a spot while Manika, India's number one TT player for a while now, slipped two places to 39 in the latest update.The 25-year-old Sreeja has enjoyed a good run this year.—*PTI*

'Yuzvendra Chahal is one I'll be frustrated with': Hesson

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

Letting go of Yuzvendra Chahal is something Royal Challengers Bengaluru could regret for the longest time, and the franchise's former director of cricket, Mike Hesson on Tuesday insisted they failed to retain the leg-spinner due to a miscalculation at the last IPL auction.On Monday, Chahal scripted history by becoming the first player in IPL to have taken 200 wickets."Yuzi is one I will be frustrated with until I have finished my career and probably beyond. He is an outstanding bowler.—*PTI*

INDIAN EARTHQUAKE IN TORONTO

Gukesh's win tectonic shift in world chess order: Kasparov

TORONTO, 23 APRIL

It's "the Indian earthquake in Toronto", said Russian chess legend Garry Kasparov as he lauded teen Grandmaster D Gukesh for becoming the youngest ever challenger for the world title, a triumph which marks the "shifting tectonic plates" in the game's global order.

The 17-year-old Gukesh bettered the record created by none other than Kasparov 40 years ago. The Russian was 22 when he qualified in 1984 to clash with compatriot Anatoly Karpov, making him the youngest challenger of that time.

"Congratulations! The Indian earthquake in Toronto is the culmination of the shifting tectonic plates in the chess world as the 17 year old Gukesh D will face the Chinese champion Ding Liren for the highest title," wrote Kasparov on 'X', obliquely referring to the Russian domination of the past.

Gukesh played out an easy draw with American Hikaru Nakamura in the 14th and final round to finish with nine out of a possible 14 points in the tournament that is held to decide the challenger to the world champion.

The triumph entitles Gukesh a clash against reigning world champion Ding Liren of China in the last quarter of the year.

India's five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand has spawned a chess culture in India and the country is reaping the rewards of the Grandmaster's success with thousands of youngsters, mostly in their teens, taking up chess.

Kasparov acknowledged Anand's contribution to Indian chess, saying, "The 'children' of Vishy Anand are on the loose!"

Kasparov was responding to a congratulatory tweet by Grand Chess Tour following Gukesh's success here.

"Congratulations to Gukesh D for his victory in the FIDE Candidates, securing his place as a challenger in the World Championship Match! We eagerly anticipate his participation in our grand chess tour events!," wrote Grand Chess Tour on 'X'.

In another social media post Kasparov highlighted the shift in power centre of chess, saying, "Look at the names of many of the top junior players in the USA and England to see that the Chinese and Indian diaspora are just as passionate to achieve at chess.

"The Kasparov Chess Foundation has watched this wave rise and Gukesh's success will raise it further," Kasparov, the undisputed world champion from 1985 till 1993, wrote on 'X'.

Kasparov, following a dispute with the international chess federation (FIDE) set up a rival organisation, the Professional Chess Association. He was ranked world No. 1 for a record 255 months overall, from 1984 until his retirement from regular competitive chess in 2005. —*PTI*

Teen Grandmaster D Gukesh **PHOTO: PTI**

Garry Kasparov **PHOTO: PTI**

- It's "the Indian earthquake in Toronto", said Russian chess legend Garry Kasparov as he lauded teen Grandmaster D Gukesh for becoming the youngest ever challenger for the world title, a triumph which marks the "shifting tectonic plates" in the game's global order.

Shotgun shooter permitted to compete in national trials

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The national shooting federation, which is fighting a court battle to uphold its selection criteria in the ongoing trials for the Paris Olympics, seems to have bent the rules for one marksman recently, allowing him to participate despite lower-than-requisite scores.

Trap marksman Karan missed the National Rifles Association of India's (NRAI) criteria for shotgun selection trials by two points but was allowed to compete, while several others, who shot identical scores during last year's National Championships, were not considered.

A letter issued by NRAI in November announcing "Selection Trials as per Shotgun Selection Criteria 2024 & Olympic Selection Criteria 2024 for Shotgun event" states that shooters with a score of 110 in senior men's trap during the 66th National Championship (October-November, 2023) were eligible for the exercise held between December 2023 and March 2024.

Karan, an Army marksman, shot 108 in the National Championships but he was the only recommendation accepted by the NRAI, while the same exception was not made for a dozen more shooters, who shot identical scores. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Djokovic and Nadal honored at Laureus World Sports Awards

LONDON, 23 APRIL

Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal were both winners at Monday night's Laureus World Sports Awards in Madrid.

Djokovic won the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year award for a record-equalling fifth time, adding to the awards he won in 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2019. The Rafael Nadal Foundation received the Laureus Sport for Good Award during the glittering ceremony. The 36-year-old Serbian was recognized for his remarkable 2023 season in which he came within one set of completing a calendar-year Grand Slam. Djokovic won majors at the Australian Open, Roland Garros, and the US Open, missing out only at Wimbledon, where he fell to Carlos Alcaraz in a five-set final. He ended the year by winning a record seventh Nitto ATP Finals title and by claiming Year-End No. 1 Presented By PIF for a record eighth time.

"I am incredibly honored to have won my fifth Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award, said Djokovic, who recently became the oldest World No. 1 in the history of the PIF ATP Rankings. "I think back to [season] 2012 when I won it for the first time as a 24-year-old. —*AP*

Djokovic and Nadal with their awards at the Laureus World Sports Awards **PHOTO: AFP**

GAIKWAD'S 100, POWER CSK TO 210/4 AGAINST LSG

CHENNAI, 23 APRIL

A remarkable unbeaten hundred by captain Ruturaj Gaikwad and Shivam Dube's ruthless fifty formed the pillars of Chennai Super Kings' competitive 210 for four against Lucknow Super Giants here on Tuesday.

Gaikwad (108, 60b, 12x4, 3x6) and Dube (66, 27b, 3x4, 7x6) added 104 runs for an entertaining fourth-wicket stand that gave steam to Super Kings innings after a rather subdued Power Play (49/2) and the middle passage.The CSK should primarily thank Gaikwad, who played an innings that was a connoisseur's delight, for that total after the early departure of Rahane, who was caught superbly by stumper KL Rahul off Matt Henry. —*PTI*

SERIE A 2023-24

Inter secures title win over AC Milan

DUBAI, 23 APRIL

Inter Milan won its 20th Serie A title on Monday after a 2-1 win at AC Milan gave Simone Inzaghi's side an unassailable lead in the standings.

A goal from Francesco Acerbi and Marcus Thuram in each half proved sufficient to secure Inter's victory, with Fikayo Tomori scoring a late goal to reduce the deficit.

The match also witnessed three red cards in stoppage time, with Milan being reduced to nine men as tensions flared, with Theo Hernandez and Davide Calabria getting their marching orders along with Inter's Denzel Dumfries.

Inter, which has lost only once in the league this season, hold a 17-point advantage over second-placed Milan with five matches remaining.

The San Siro was packed with supporters from both clubs, with Inter fans displaying two stars to symbolise their impending 20th Scudetto, spelling out a message to their rivals: 'Our destiny, your nightmare.'

The match heated up in the opening minutes as both sides engaged in pushing and shouting following a late challenge on Inter's Nicolo Barella. However, play resumed a few minutes later without any bookings.

After 18 minutes, the away fans erupted after Benjamin Pavard flicked a corner to a completely unmarked Acerbi, who had little trouble heading in the lead for Inter.

Four minutes after the break, Thuram doubled Inter's lead by sending a low shot from the edge of the box into the bottom-left corner.

Milan reignited the match 10 minutes before the time when a save from Inter keeper Yann Sommer rebounded off the post and fell into the path of Fikayo Tomori, who headed it home.

In stoppage time, tempers flared as a scuffle broke out between the players which resulted in Dumfries and Hernandez being shown red cards. —*AP*

Inter Milan won their 20th Serie A title on Monday after a 2-1 win at AC Milan **PHOTO: AFP**

- The match also witnessed three red cards in stoppage time, with Milan being reduced to nine men as tensions flared, with Theo Hernandez and Davide Calabria getting their marching orders along with Inter's Denzel Dumfries.

Leeds' promotion push back on track after 7-goal thriller

LONDON, 23 APRIL

Leeds revived their chances of automatic promotion to the Premier League as Crysencio Summerville scored twice in a 4-3 win at Middlesbrough on Monday. Daniel Farke's men had failed to win in their three previous Championship matches to put at risk an immediate return to the English top-flight. Victory takes Leeds into second, one point ahead of Ipswich, with only the top two automatically promoted. However, third-placed Ipswich have three games remaining to Leeds' two. Defeat mathematically ended Boro's hopes of going up via the playoffs.

Leeds poor run looked like it could continue when Isaiah Jones took advantage of hesitant defending to put the home side in front after just seven minutes.

But the visitors turned the match around in an explosive first half.

Summerville converted the equaliser from the penalty spot before Patrick Bamford silenced the Middlesbrough boos on his return to the Riverside.

Emmanuel Latte Lath's fierce strike from outside the box brought Middlesbrough level once more.

Leeds retook the lead in controversial circumstances before half-time as Wilfried Gnonto fired in from Summerville's pass despite the Italian international clearly being in an offside position. —*AP*

Leeds revived their chances of automatic promotion to the Premier League as Crysencio Summerville scored twice in a 4-3 win at Middlesbrough **PHOTO: AFP**